

Supporting International Social Work International Development Fund: **Covid-19 Initiative**



BASW

The professional association for
social work and social workers

CHAIR'S FOREWORD



I am delighted to welcome this report which has been published to show members how funds from the BASW International Development Fund (IDF) have been used during the recent pandemic. Since early 2020, social workers around the globe have stepped up to provide help and support to those most in need who have been deeply affected. With the BASW IDF unable to be used in its intended way, with all but the most essential international travel restricted and methods of international knowledge exchange moving rapidly on-line, the decision was taken to temporarily shift the focus of the International Development Fund to providing financial support to groups of our international colleagues to assist in that vital work.

This report contains a brief overview of those eight projects across a number of countries including, Guinea Bissau, India and Malawi. The short project reports demonstrate the creativity and determination of social workers and their colleagues to help those in need regardless of circumstance. These projects have provided essentials in the form of food and water, critical healthcare education and information on how to stay safe, and support for social workers during challenging times.

I invite you to read this short report and see how a small contribution by each individual BASW member has been able to make a difference around the world during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Gerry Nosowska
BASW Chair

Front cover: Distributing essential food and non-food items in Kenya

SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK

The BASW International Development Fund (IDF) was established in 2014 with the aim of putting international exchange and development in a more accessible place than is currently possible and to assist BASW members in the international exchange of skills, knowledge, and experiences. To support this, BASW collects a £2 levy, as part of the membership fees, to go towards the IDF. Since 2014 the IDF has supported a range of partnership and individual applications, including countries such as Sierra Leone, Uganda, USA, Malawi and Norway, with projects supporting education and learning; migrant and refugee social work; and concepts and experiences of race, racism, and cultural difference.

Since early 2020 we have experienced the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic has created global social and economic crises alongside the health crisis, with an impact on all citizens. Covid-19 has reversed global progress in human developments and widened inequalities¹. Social workers are key workers in the response, especially facilitating the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised groups in access to social and health care and basic human rights, including access to food and water, during the pandemic.

In the summer of 2020, the decision was taken to temporarily repurpose the IDF to provide funding for overseas groups of social workers who might need financial support in their response to Covid-19, with funding of £30,000 available, with grants available for between £500 and £5,000, initially for a six-month period. After an open application process, eight projects were awarded funding to conduct projects to support local groups and individuals whose circumstances had been further aggravated by the consequences of the pandemic. A principal requirement for these projects was the centrality of social work and social workers.

As the crises generated by the pandemic showed no signs of abating after the initial six months, the eight projects were invited to apply for an extension to their funding to allow them to support more people and/or to undertake work in new localities. In total, around £70,000 of IDF funding has been spent across twelve months providing international support. This short report highlights the work that has been supported by the BASW International Development Fund at a time of global crisis.

¹ United Nations 75 Office of the Under-Secretary (2021) *Shaping Our Future Together: Listening to People's Priorities for the Future and Their Ideas for Action*. New York, NY: United Nations.

SOCIAL WORK AS AN INTERNATIONAL PROFESSION

Social work is an international professional, reflected in the global definition for social work.

Social Work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. (Definition of Social Work adopted in 2014, by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Federation of Social Work (IFSW))

Social work is targeted at interventions for social support and for developmental, protective, preventive and/or therapeutic purposes. It is operationalised differently both within nation states and regional boundaries, and across the world, with local practices and global implications².

The global theme for 2020-2022 is **Ubuntu: I am because we are. Ubuntu** can be defined as a culture in which individuals express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, and mutuality in the interest of building and maintaining communities with justice commonalities and the centrality of group solidarity where challenges can be survived because of community concerns, cooperation, care and sharing.

Social Work and social workers all over the world play a crucial role in the social, economic, and political transformation to support inclusive and healthy societies.

Global agenda for social work and social development

After a first common agreement in 2012, the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Council of Social Welfare (ICSW) adopted in 2020 a Global Agenda 2030 for Social Work and Social Development. This initiative provides a common basis for joint action addressing the major challenges of our societies and identifying relevant social issues for our profession and beyond. The Global Agenda is a strong commitment to promote social and economic equality, the dignity and worth of people, and environmental and community sustainability

- Equality, diversity, and inclusivity are central values for practice, recognising the oppression and discrimination on individuals and groups and the social work role and responsibility in challenging and changing this.
- Social work consists of multiple local practices, but local conditions are intertwined with global processes of change beyond the national level.
- Social workers need to actively participate, learn from others, and be involved in social work solidarity action for promoting global justice and against the consequences of global problems.

2 O'Leary, P. and Tsui, M-s (2020) Editorial: An international profession with commonalities and differences: Social work responses to COVID-19 where local is global and vice versa, *International Social Work*, 63 (6) 715-716

THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF COVID-19

The Covid-19 pandemic has thrown into sharp relief the weaknesses of our global system, including:

- the vulnerability of certain groups, especially Black and Ethnic Minority communities and those individuals in lower socio-economic groups,
- under-funded and uneven health systems,
- lack of social protection,
- lack of preparedness,
- socio-economic exploitation and
- deepening cracks in international cooperation and solidarity.

Consequently the most vulnerable people in our societies are struggling to stay safe, and to meet their most basic needs.



▲ COVID-19 AWARENESS AND PREVENTION TRAINING IN GUINEA BISSAU

THE BASW RESPONSE: COVID-19 INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND INITIATIVE

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a massive impact all over the world, with those living in developing countries feeling a particular impact in highlighting the limitations of their public health response to the pandemic and interacting with existing environmental health disparities. Covid-19 has had a disproportionate toll on individuals and groups who are marginalized and suffer discrimination based on descent, people from ethnic or religious minorities, as well as indigenous peoples. Many of the world's poor have no access to life-saving medical facilities; in the entire African continent, there are just 20,000 critical care beds, equivalent to 1.7 for every 100,000 people. For example, in Malawi there are 25 ICU beds for its 17 million citizens, while in Bangladesh there are just 1,100 ICU beds for a population of more than 160 million. Financial and resources support from other (richer) countries has been significantly reduced or withdrawn all together. Workers have found themselves living in critical containment areas and many have and/or are suffering from Covid-19 and Post Covid-19 effects (World Economic Forum; World Health Organisation; UNICEF; United Nations).

The IDF grants were intended as an immediate response to support and learn from evolving social work practice and demonstrate alliance and solidarity with international social work colleagues, especially given the impact and challenges of Covid-19 for international social work and social workers. Funding was made available to support any form of social work practice including, for example (in no order of priority): mental health; domestic violence; safeguarding; young carers; physical and learning disability; HIV/AIDS; children without family/friends/carers; long-term health conditions; migration, refugees and asylum seekers; training, education and research; criminal justice; protection of human rights including access to food and water; community education about health and infection.

Funding could be made available to national social work associations or groups of associations to help them develop support for their members delivering social work practice

The criteria for determining successful applications for funding were:

- supporting social workers directly or social work agencies or national associations of social workers responding to the Covid-19 pandemic
- outside the UK
- involve service users directly or in partnership
- while addressing the immediate issue of Covid-19, have regard to sustainability of project outputs
- address knowledge sharing
- increase community resilience to manage Covid-19
- evidence of support (e.g. formal letter) from the national (or local) social work association in the relevant country.

IDF GRANTS COVID-19 INITIATIVE: PROJECTS SUPPORTED

The following Projects have been supported under this initiative:

- Protecting vulnerable people from the effects of Covid-19, Guinea Bissau.
- Kerala Initiative for Developmental Service (KIDS), Kerala, India
- Myrtle Social Work Network, Tamil Nadu, India
- Kenya National Association of Social Workers (KNASW), Africa
- Mulelewaka Foundation: Children's Corner, Malawi, Africa
- Community Relief Palestine Project, West Bank, Palestine.
- Tuwone Project, Kitega Community Centre, Uganda, Africa.
- African Social Work Conversation Virtual Forum project: Telling our social work practice stories. Social Workers Association of Zambia (SWAZ), International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) Africa Region

The BASW International Committee recognises and commends the unstinting responses all organisations have made under the extreme circumstances and significant pressure in which they were delivering project objectives. The reports and photos that follow are drawn from the short reports submitted by the project teams on their progress.

WELLFOUND: GUINEA BISSAU

Overview of WellFound

WellFound works in the remotest villages of Africa to provide a holistic and comprehensive programme of activities, including installing wells; providing community latrines; organising market gardens; promoting good health: ensuring equality in village affairs and ensuring sustainability to maintain facilities.

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to the need to have direct contact with remote and poor communities to educate on and provide PPE equipment. In addition to the health risks, a secondary effect of the pandemic has been a drastic price increase of at least 25% in basic foodstuffs such as rice, due to imports being at a standstill and the international rises in the price of food. This continues to be a problem, leaving families who were previously malnourished to go hungry.

IDF Support for Work Undertaken

Monies supported two Health Workers, one male and one female, to undertake activities focussed on the Island of Caravela. They started by training local volunteers from each community to help in the process. Over a period of three months, health workers in Caravela were able to achieve the following:

- Holding 27 Events on Covid-19 to the communities in Caravela, including prevention and what to do if you or a member of the community is suspected of being infected
- Helping the communities to construct 121 individual hand washing stations.
- Installing six public hand washing stations.
- Suppling 160 masks and instructing on their proper use
- Visiting 45 houses with Covid-19 awareness-raising programme
- Helping to evacuate two pregnant women to health centres on the island of Bubaque where there is a larger and better equipped hospital.



▲ CELESTE, ONE OF TWO HEALTHWORKERS, WITH A GROUP OF WOMEN DURING A COVID-19 WORKSHOP

KERALA INITIATIVE FOR DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICE (KIDS), INDIA

Overview of KIDS

Kerala Initiative for Developmental Services (KIDS) is a non-governmental organization, established in 2018 and operating across India through a professional social workers' network to ensure the empowerment of women and youth through various activities. KIDS is aiming at the progressive and sustainable social development of vulnerable people through the physical, psychological, and socio-economic development of marginalized people in society. KIDS concentrates on the holistic development of the marginalized population through the collaboration of government and non-governmental organizations.

IDF Support for Work Undertaken

KIDS have used the IDF support to:

- Extend women's self-help groups: extending their support to more women, from poor socio-economic conditions, to form Self Help Groups (SHG) and be a part of the KIDS programme. They have identified and supported the group to form and register the SHG and the group of women, with the support of KIDS staffs, completed the initial process and submitted all documents to government for registering their SHG officially.
- Undertake module preparation for Online Higher-Level Intervention training for professional social workers developed by four expert professional social workers



▲ KIT DISTRIBUTION TO CHILDLINE STAFF IN PALAKKAD DISTRICT

MYRTLE SOCIAL WELFARE NETWORK, TAMIL NADU, INDIA

Overview of Myrtle Social Welfare Network

The Myrtle Social Welfare Network is a Public Charitable Organization working for the social and economic welfare and development of all classes of people irrespective of caste, creed, sex, and religion. Myrtle has more than a decade of experience of successfully initiating several specialized programmes to reach out to deprived children, youth and community for Educational Institutions, Government departments, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), International Non-Government Organisations (INGOs) and United Nations (UN) Agencies.



▲ PROVIDING NUTRITIONAL ASSISTANCE, MYRTLE SWN

IDF Support for Work Undertaken

Myrtle Social Welfare Network targeted the marginalized communities of IRULA Tribe community, Scheduled Caste community, Shoemakers community at Attrambakkam village Panchayat and Odappai village panchayat of Poondi block, Uthukottai Taluk, Tiruvallur district, Tamilnadu, India. These communities are vulnerable due to the caste system in India. They live in isolated places outside city limits and work as menial labour or in other unskilled services such as manual charcoal production, farming, woodcutting and so on. These communities are often migrated from one place to another for their livelihood. The children of the community are poor and illiterate; they are deprived of access and continual education.

A team of six professional social workers and volunteers of the Myrtle Social Welfare Network came together to intervene in the Irula community by creating awareness programmes on Covid-19 through puppets and providing psycho-social support to reach the most vulnerable communities. The main focus was to:

- Provide rich nutritional food to children: with schools closed children have missed out on a midday meal. The project has sought to provide the midday meal. In addition, the team of social workers has developed a plan to ensure a healthy protein-rich food which will be served to children in the evening where each child will get 150 grams of cooked and boiled lentils, nuts, and pulses.
- Awareness of hygiene and nutritional food: While distributing the midday foods to children, social workers aim to create an interaction with children about hygiene such as washing hands before eating, good food habits, awareness about nutritional foods.
- Distributing rations to the community: Myrtle initiated 354 dry ration kits to the above said six villages, each kit content 10 kg rice, 5 kg atta, 1 litre of cooking oil, 2 kg dhal, 1 kg sugar and 1kg salt – a 20 kg dry ration kit for each family.

KENYA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS (KNASW): MITIGATING THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 IN KENYA

Overview of KNASW Project

This Project has been managed by the Kenyan National Association of Social Workers (KNASW), the professional body for social workers in Kenya.

IDF Support for Work Undertaken

The project has supported:

- Raising awareness of Covid-19 and ways to mitigate its spread: recognising that information was confusing and fragmented, KNASW has sought to develop strategies to raise awareness that are more culturally sensitive and targeted.
- Distribution of food and non-food items: Social workers were able to target children and their families where lockdown has led to the loss of jobs. They were able to target 250 beneficiaries in Nairobi County and two rural counties (Kisumu and Kakamega). In addition, they were able to provide support and counselling.

The identification and documentation of the learning and experiences has led to KNASW highlighting the capacity and requirements for frontline social workers, community health workers and community health volunteers necessary for the communities to deal with the current and post-pandemic effects of Covid-19.



▲ PREPARING TO DISTRIBUTE FOOD AND NON-FOOD ESSENTIALS, KNASW

MULELEWAKA FOUNDATION: CHILDREN CORNERS, MALAWI

Overview of Children's Project

The Mulelewaka Foundation, and Non-Government Organisation, facilitates projects that are aimed at improving the general welfare of women, children, and youth by providing a safe environment and supportive environment, support, advocacy, and counselling.

'Children's Corners' are community spaces for both in and out of school children aged 6 to 18 years. They are a key community structure to protect girls and boys from violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect, as well as responding to their developmental needs, including HIV impact mitigation. Through weekly participation in children's corners, girls and boys have the opportunity to socialize, play, sing, dance, compose and recite poems and tell stories. The most vulnerable children are prioritized to achieve specific outcomes.

IDF Support for Work Undertaken

A specific focus has been to raise public awareness of the safety and efficacy of Covid-19 vaccinations in the district of Dedza, a district in the Central Region of Malawi. The district has a

population of 830, 512. The District Council Social Welfare Department has a total number of 10 social workers, 271 Children Corners with a total of 1,325 Children Corner Facilitators. From the 1,325 Children Corner Facilitators, only 382 facilitators are trained while 943 facilitators are untrained. Supported by BASW funding and further support from Children and Families International (a UK based charity), the Mulelewaka Foundation worked in collaboration with the District Council Social Welfare Department to provide training to Children's Corners Facilitators for direct work with children and families. Children Corner Facilitators have been trained in knowledge and skills to ensure that children in the district especially those vulnerable to the impact of HIV and AIDS, sexual exploitation, and early marriages during the pandemic of Covid-19 are receiving high quality services. With the closure of schools due to Covid-19 the training will help facilitators in mitigating the psychological and social issues the children are facing which are on the rise in the District. With insufficient social workers in the District, the trained Children's Corner Facilitators will assist in provide quality social services to improve outcomes for children and their families.



▲ A 'TRAIN THE TRAINERS' SESSION FOR CHILDREN'S CORNER FACILITATORS, MALAWI

COMMUNITY RELIEF PALESTINE PROJECT, WEST BANK, PALESTINE

Overview of Community Relief Palestine Project

The Community Relief Palestine Project was established as a direct humanitarian response to the impact of Covid-19 on the communities of the West Bank, Palestine. A distribution team of social workers were appointed to work with communities in the West Bank

IDF Support for Work Undertaken

The Project identified two areas of specific community response in terms of needs emerging in West Bank Communities during this year of the Covid-19 pandemic outbreaks:

1. PPE packs and food parcels for youth detained in the Military Detention System where they would be at risk of both hardship and infection in an enclosed space. Through the distribution team, families of children represented in the prison service could be contacted and supported by the social workers. Children in prison were contacted to know of this relief and to keep the contact with them. PPE packs were made available for the child prisoners.

2. PPE packs, food parcels and educational materials for families in need identified by social workers working in the West Bank communities of Palestine, specifically the District of H2 Hebron, an area of intense armed conflict. In particular, the team decided to disperse the packs of PPE, food supplies and educational materials to families in two refugee camps in Hebron: Al-Arroub and Al-Fawar. Families in these camps are particularly hard to reach and the distribution of the packs has enabled social workers to make a connection, to offer practical relief but also to offer psychosocial support and counselling. In this environment, this is a crucial social work intervention as people are displaced from their homes by military force; they are living in a community of refugees where the Military Rule does not recognise the rights of refugees under section 14 of the 1948 United Nations Agreement. These refugee communities are more isolated from statutory services and provisions, and live in a higher state of poverty and unsanitary conditions



▲ ESSENTIALS AWAITING DISTRIBUTION IN THE WEST BANK

KITEGA COMMUNITY CENTRE, UGANDA: TUWONE PROJECT

Overview of the Kitega Community Centre

The Kitega Community Centre is an NGO whose stated primary purpose is to empower children with disadvantages and disabilities, to advocate for disability rights, and to foster community-owned development so that everyone can lead dignified, productive lives. The Kitega Community Centre is located in Kitega village, Kawolo Sub-county, Mukono District, about 40km from Kampala, the capital of Uganda.

Uganda has experienced an unsettling number of domestic and gender-based violence cases occurring against the backdrop of the Covid-19 outbreak. This has resulted into innumerable cases of social disparity. Over 2000 under aged girls (October 2020) have been the victims of child pregnancies arising from sexual domestic violence from their guardians and other members of the community. Many labourers have been unjustly laid off at their workplaces, people living in poverty have lost their property and many cannot access the justice systems because these are commercialised.

IDF Support for Work Undertaken

Monies have supported the Child Protection Programme who have offered support to 50 children who have been subject to abuse, including home visits, identification of cases of child pregnancies occurring during the lockdown; webinar/ conference of Women Leaders (Nabakyala) to train parents on Child Protection Policies; offering counselling to victims of abuse; offering relief items to children in need; and referral of abused/ homeless children to safe homes in Uganda. The Tuwone Project used the monies to train seven Paralegals to support the work of the Centre's two Lawyers. The activities undertaken by the paralegals included identification and profiling of victims, data collection, case selection, preparation of witness statements, selection of advocates to handle the cases, drafting of court documents, payment of court fees, transport costs to and from court for witnesses, victims

and counsel and other miscellaneous expenses. They have also been able to offer Legal Aid Services to 50 Indigent Persons, especially victims of the circumstances following the pandemic.

AFRICAN SOCIAL WORK CONVERSATION VIRTUAL FORUM PROJECT: TELLING OUR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE STORIES

Overview of African Social Work Conversation Virtual Forum Project

This project has been managed by the Social Workers Association of Zambia (SWAZ) on behalf of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) – Africa Region, in partnership with Children and Families Foundation International. It has supported the development of infrastructure and purchase of equipment to support the Virtual Forum and other objectives.

IDF Support for Work Undertaken

The Project's primary objective has been to convene webinar conversations with social work practitioners from all parts of Africa to share and document their practice stories to contribute to the narrative on global social work practice. Monthly webinars have been led by social work practitioner and academics around a specific

theme and were successfully held and conducted using the infrastructure put in place by the project. Topics have included: *Human Rights Violations amid Covid-19 pandemic in Africa*; *Social Work Voices from the inside*; *Indigenous social work practice in Africa: telling our practice stories amid Covid -19 Intervention*; *African Women Tackling Injustice*; *Ubuntu: I am Because We are – Strengthening Social Solidarity and Global Connectedness*; and *Sharing our lived experience of 'Ubuntu': Telling our stories around the evening fire*. Sharing social work best practices from an African perspective has seen attendance from across the region and the globe at large, with the majority streamed live on IFSW Global and Africa Region Facebooks. This has raised the profile of social work profession in the Africa Region. Further it has stimulated the culture of storytelling about social work practice experiences and documentation to contribute to knowledge generation.

THE VALUE OF UBUNTU TO SOCIAL WORK

GUEST SPEAKER

Date: Monday 15th March 2021
Time: 15:30 PM CAT

Live Stream via YouTube and Facebook IFSW Africa
<https://www.facebook.com/IFSW-Africa>

Hosts
Noel Muridzo
&
Joachim Mumba

Dr Jacob Mugumbate

UBUNTU
I Am Because We Are
STRENGTHENING SOCIAL SOLIDARITY & GLOBAL CONNECTEDNESS

BASW
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Children & Families
INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION

WORLD SOCIAL WORK DAY
16TH MARCH 2021
#WSWD2021

AFRICA REGION

www.ifsw.org

▲ AN EXAMPLE FROM THE ONLINE SUPPORT NETWORK PROVIDED BY IFSW-AFRICA REGION AND SUPPORTED BY THE SOCIAL WORKERS ASSOCIATION OF ZAMBIA.

Engaging with regional and international bodies has been increased, including the African Union (AU); Southern African Development Community (SADC); East African Community (EAC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to raise the voice of social work and demand for recognition of the profession amongst member states. There has also been contact with the Commonwealth Organization for Social Work (COSW) and the Global Social Services Workforce Alliance (GSSWA) as allies for this advocacy work.

The Social Work Conversation Virtual Forum Project has progressively achieved its aspiration of stimulating African social workers to tell and document their social work practice stories. The African Social Work Conversation Virtual Forum project is reaching many people through its Facebook page and YouTube channels. The Project has also reached out to francophone African Nations. The African Social Work Conversation Virtual Forum Project is proved to be a great success as it has managed to amplify the once silent voices of social workers by stimulating a conversation on telling our practice stories. It is hoped that Africa social work approaches and models will be profiled through the project to the extent that it will contribute to enrichment of global social work narratives.

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