



**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION  
SUPPORTING SOCIAL WORK IN MALAWI (SSWIM)**

Welcome to the Supporting Social Work in Malawi (SSWIM) Supporter's second Newsletter from 2020.

### **Impact of Covid 19 Pandemic**

In our last newsletter in April 2020 we acknowledged the impact that was starting to be seen in Malawi as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic and we later followed this up with a separate appeal to our supporters in July to support our fundraising for PPE for social workers in Malawi. Many thanks to all those who donated to our appeal; we were delighted that we were able to raise £907 which converted into K89,6000 (Kwacha) which we passed on to the Malawi Association of Social Workers to distribute locally.

At the time of writing this newsletter there are an increasing number of cases being reported - 18,439 cases and 470 deaths recorded in Malawi and the situation is critical with reportedly only 7 ventilators across the whole country and oxygen shortages in hospitals. As in the UK, there are debates about how best to respond to the crisis, with particular concerns about the impact on children of schools being closed. We are aware that whilst further education colleges and universities have tried to be creative about delivering their courses, some aspects of teaching have had to be curtailed. Meanwhile in Malawi school closures resulted in up to 44,000 teenage pregnancies during the period that schools were closed due to the pandemic. Such that the President of Malawi Dr Lazarus Chakwera declared it an emergency and acknowledged that the low numbers of child protection workers, which is up to 300 for the whole country, required urgent address.



The President of Malawi Dr Lazarus Chakwera with Children from various parts of Malawi.

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The impact of the pandemic both here and in Malawi has inevitably affected our work and the way that we have been supporting colleagues in Malawi and other African countries. It has also provided us with new opportunities for engagement and communication within SSWIM and with Colleagues in other organisations.

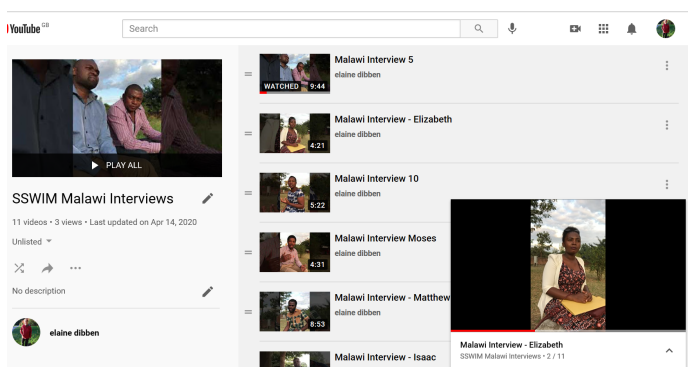
We continue to work with the key objectives we have identified as the main focus of SSWIM's involvement in Malawi going forward where we can and we report on the progress of these below as well as other CFIF and SSWIM initiatives.

### **Supporting delivery of Practice Educators training**

Although we have not been able to return to Malawi as planned in 2020 to run our fourth Practice Educator's course Dr Janet Walker and Dr Simon Cauvin have kept in contact through a WhatsApp group with Practice Educators who have been trained by SSWIM since 2016. Our focus has been on maintaining current communications and supporting colleagues at a distance through the immense challenges they face.

The interviews we recorded with course participants talking about their motivation to become social workers and the varying roles they have working in their communities are available on YouTube and we would encourage you to view them using the following link – [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLuDxvHmH9f\\_z4xORJivFkNVNXtMWhW8\\_-](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLuDxvHmH9f_z4xORJivFkNVNXtMWhW8_-)

The students convey a real sense of their commitment to their work and the value of social work in their local communities.



### **The Professionalisation of Social Work in Malawi and the development of the Malawi Association of Social Workers.**

There are currently about 400-600 social workers in Malawi and several hundred other unqualified workers in the equivalent of Social Welfare Assistant roles.

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SSWIM was involved in supporting two National Social Work Conferences held in Malawi in 2018 and 2019 and in October this year we were delighted when Anstance received the following message from a previous student from Magomero College which highlights how the next generation of social workers in Malawi are playing their part in taking things forward;

*Dear Anstance*

*My name is Chifundo Jericho, a student speaker at the first Malawi's International Conference of Social Work in 2018. I am happy to inform you that I have graduated with a Diploma in Social Work with a distinction at Magomero College.*

*Meeting you and the other influential social workers at the conference reignited the passion that I have for the profession, thus I was made to work even harder to graduate with the best grade possible. Soon after the conference, I went back to college energised and together with my colleagues we founded Magomero Social Work Association (MASOWA) a student body that has been very active working with communities surrounding the college. I was voted as the first president of MASOWA.*

*Please note that your book which you gave me as a gift had an impact on my performance at school.*

*Regards.*

*Chifundo Jericho*

The National Association of Social Workers in Malawi which was launched in 2019 is a member of the International Federation of Social Work and the International Association of Schools of Social Workers. Although it was not possible to organize and hold a third National Social Work Conference in Malawi – members of the NASWIM and SSWIM members, particularly our Chair of Trustees Anstance Fometu have been working with the International Federation of Social Work African Region to run a series of online webinars this year with funding from BASW focusing on the impact of the pandemic and other key issues for African nations – these are still available on their Facebook page for those interested in viewing them - <https://www.facebook.com/IFSW-Africa-213980142304971> :

May – Leadership in an Emergency,

June – Building a Resilient Sisterhood – How African women have responded to Covid 19 and No to Racism

July – Ubuntu – ‘I am because we are’ and Climate Justice

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August – Child Abuse and Teenage Pregnancy – The Law and Social Protection during the Covid 19 Pandemic and Human Rights Violations amid Covid 19 in Africa

October – Anti – Oppressive Practice

Late November to early December – 16 Days of Activism against gender violence and The Boy Child

In July a new Minister, Dr Patricia Kaliati was appointed to the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare and Anstance wrote to her in August to introduce her to the work of SSWIM and to encourage her to support the Social Work Practitioners Bill 2021 which will establish social work as a recognized profession in Malawi.

This led to further contact being made and a Zoom call being held in November with a number of SSWIM members, the Honorable Minister Dr Patricia Kaliati, Country Director of Social Welfare Dina Gumulira, Members of The Malawi Social work Taskforce, academics based in Malawi, UK and Canada, and social workers in Diaspora in the UK who all are eager to see the progression of The Social Work Practitioner Bill become law, when it is presented to parliament in February 2021.



Zoom meeting November 2020, with Minister of Social welfare, Dr Patricia Kaliati.

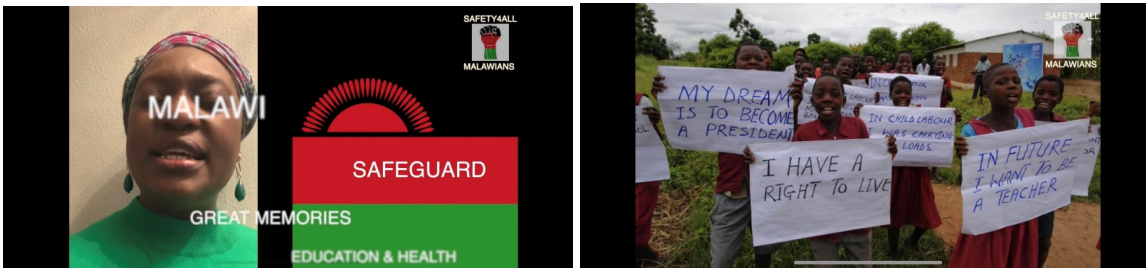
Dr Kaliati, with the support of the president of Malawi, informed us that the ministry will take the Social work Bill to parliament in February 2021. Dr Kaliati added that the government was in the process of harmonizing all laws that related to children and vulnerable adults, to ensure that their rights are protected. Dr Kaliati, further thanked the SSWIM team that has been supporting the professionalization of social work in Malawi.

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A short film was made by Anstance to highlight the need to safeguard children in Malawi with the Safety for All Malawi Team, which consists of social workers in Diaspora and Malawians concerned with the high numbers of child abuse cases in Malawi – this two minute film can be viewed on this link - <https://youtu.be/yXFbizLRcJ4>



### **Research and writing group.**

Members of the SSWIM research and writing group have continued to promote and support the development of indigenous social work resources for social workers in Malawi written by practitioners and academics in Malawi. Two of our members, Erin and Helen, have been supporting Loveness Inman who is the Dean of Social Science department at the Catholic university and a qualified Social worker and Joy Mkandawire based at St Johns of God - social workers in Malawi who are looking to develop research in relation to their specific area of work; Joy is particularly interested to research and write on the issue of isolated men and suicide with particular reference to stigma, grief, prevention and family support. Loveness' interest is focused on the contribution which social work can make to supporting older people. Both may require help to find funding in order to further their invaluable work.

### **BASW Grant to provide Training for Childrens' Corners staff.**

David Pitcher has maintained his links with this project and has reported that the provision of training to staff and volunteers working in Children's Corners had proved to be a very useful initiative. Feedback will be sought from both from those who have received the training and the young people who are service users.

'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 socialise, play, sing, dance, compose and recite poems and tell stories. The most vulnerable children are prioritized to achieve specific outcomes. Children's corners are run by community volunteers and supervised by child protection workers who are well trained and strategically positioned at community level

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The Dedza area where the training has been focused has been hit very badly by Covid and acute social problems are being reported in that area. There are high incidences of child sexual abuse and a lack of resources to ensure that children are occupied.



*'It was awesome ... the children and facilitator didn't believe that the materials were theirs. They had no playing materials, balls, jerseys, or stationary for a long time and when they saw them they were really happy.'*

Additional funding from BASW meant we were able to provide play materials and books for 4 centers. One centre had 600 children attending. Many people from the community attended when these supplies were delivered and the feedback from volunteers was very emotional;





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## How you can support SSWIM

### Fundraising

We have a small number of regular donations from people who have set up a monthly direct debit to support SSWIM's work; we are very grateful for their continuing interest and support and would like to encourage others to consider this way of supporting our work but we also look for fundraising opportunities. The value of our contribution as a charity is primarily in the time and expertise which our members donate willingly but we definitely need to increase our funding both to meet the basic maintenance costs of being a registered charity but most importantly to be able to support specific projects in the countries we seek to work with.

### The Value of Books



As highlighted in the message from Chifundo, the provision of books has a significant impact on the learning for social work students and indeed their lecturers. We continue to send out donated books, journals and training materials which are very much appreciated by the university. This is an excellent option for retiring social workers, lecturers or researchers wanting to declutter or universities or college libraries who are updating their stock - most recently we have received a collection of counselling books from someone who was retiring.

Do contact Chris Smith on [weltonchris@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:weltonchris@yahoo.co.uk) if you have any ideas about how we can raise awareness of this or have materials to donate. We are grateful to the charity [Krizevac](#) who will send out any donated materials with their regular shipments to Malawi.

Thank you to Lydia and Anna Hosking who organized a consignment of Books that will be going to The University of Malawi Library, Chancellor College and shipped to Malawi by CART (Christian African Relief Trust).

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We are also still keen going forward to explore ways of enabling students and social workers to access online materials which give free access to research and academic publications.

**CFIF Trustee Board and the governance of SSWIM.**

CFIF has been a registered charity since 2007 and we have 5 trustees - Anstance Fometu, Chair of the Trustees, Nigel Hall, our Vice Chair, Christine Mungoshi who is a member of the International Committee of British Association of Social workers (BASW), Chris Smith, our Secretary and Simba Maposa, our Treasurer. Our Annual Return to the Charity Commission was submitted as required in October 2020 following completion and approval of our Annual Accounts, prepared as always with thoroughness by Simba.

Our current trustees would welcome any expressions of interest from others who might consider becoming a trustee or who have recommendations of others we might approach. In particular the trustees would benefit from having a colleague who is able to bring fundraising expertise.

SSWIM comprises a core group of academics and practitioners across the UK who meet two or three times annually and steer the work with Chanco University and support the Association of Social Workers in Malawi in the development of social work in Malawi.

Nottingham Trent University and Lincoln University continue to support us through the involvement of Dr Simon Cauvain and Dr Janet Walker.

**Our Website, Social Media and Supporter's Network**

The work of SSWIM is supported by our Supporters Network which was established in 2017. Individual members of the network have offered their support and a small number have become more directly involved over time. SSWIM also benefits from continuing interest and support from BASW and the Malawi High Commission. We are always interested to hear from any of our supporters who would like to become more actively involved with the Steering group and we are always looking to see how we can use the skills and experience of our interested supporters.

If you would be interested in becoming a trustee of CFIF or specifically in supporting the work of SSWIM you should contact Chris Smith on [weltonchris@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:weltonchris@yahoo.co.uk).