

## **ASASWEI Annual Report October 2023 – November 2024**

### **Message from the President**

The elections of the current ASASWEI EXCO in September 2023 came with huge excitement and uncertainty about what the future holds, but the year ended so quickly yet with huge success. EXCO held three meetings to build rapport before the year swiftly gave way to 2024. Between February and June, EXCO met five times and attended to various pieces that relate to our mandate. In earnest, the hard work started with the virtual year planning meeting that took place on 12 June 2024. We are pleased that we were able to steer the ship in the right direction and not sink in the ocean. We survived in our first year of office, and we are proud to share our achievements and delight.

Below is a description of the various activities that the EXCO embarked on since our election at the joyful and successful conference held at the Southern Sun Elangeni Hotel – Durban on 28 September 2023. The 2024 academic year began amidst the Israel/Palestine war, coupled with threats by the Department of Social Development (DSD) to cut NPO funding and many other socio-economic, environmental challenges and political uncertainties, which call for social work academics and students to intensify efforts in advocating for social, economic, environmental and ecological justice.

Concomitantly, 2024 has been a significant and productive year for ASASWEI marked by strengthened partnerships and collaborations, thought leadership and exciting new developments. This year, we strengthened existing collaborations and fostered new partnerships with various stakeholders, celebrated milestones based on our year plan, and strengthened the role of social work education, research and practice in addressing pressing social, economic, political and environmental challenges. Our planned activities focused on enhancing professional and academic development, elevating environmental social work, professional conduct, and strengthening local, regional and international collaboration.

### **Overview of Events and Activities**

Below is a detailed account of the events and activities successfully implemented by ASASWEI between October 2023 and November 2024.

#### **1. World Social Work Day Lecture**

On 19 March 2024, the ASASWEI hosted a World Social Work Day Lecture in celebration of the International World Social Work Day. The lecture focused on *Beun Vivir: A Shared Future for Transformative Change* and was presented by Professor Antoinette Lombard, the Head of Department of Social Work and Criminology at the University of Pretoria and President of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW). The respondents were Ass. Prof Mpumelelo Ncube – Head of Social Work Department at University of Free State (UFS) and Mr Nkqubela Aphiwe Ntloko - a PhD candidate at North West University (NWU). The lecture brought together social work academics, researchers, practitioners, and students to celebrate the profession's contribution to promoting Ubuntu, social justice and equality and emphasised the role of social work in empowering communities amidst global challenges.

## 2. “Coming to Africa” IASSW Celebration

On 25 April 2024, ASASWEI hosted a historic celebration, marking a significant achievement for the social work fraternity and South Africa. The event was organised to congratulate and honour the election of Prof Antoinette Lombard – Head of the Department of Social Work and Criminology at the University of Pretoria (UP) as the incoming IASSW President and Assoc. Professor Janestic M. Twikirize from the Department of Social Work – Makerere University (MU) as the incoming IASSW Secretary and Membership Chair. Thus, the event simultaneously, celebrated the achievement of Africa as a continent. The event was hosted in a blended mode to include social work academics, researchers, students and practitioners across the African continent. This event showcased South Africa’s and Africa’s growing influence in global social work education and training and provided a platform to honour the pioneering leaders who are tasked with shaping the social work profession both locally, regionally and internationally.

## 3. ASASWEI Journal Club Webinars

Firstly, the newly established ASASWEI Journal Club has been actively organising webinars as per its mandate. Their first installation took place on 28 May 2024 where the team organised a presentation by Professors Katijah Khoza-Shangase, Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology – University of the Witwatersrand (WITS) and Priscilla Gutura, Department of Social Work and Criminology – University of Pretoria (UP) entitled **Writing for Publication**. Prof Khoza-Shangase focused on **Selecting the appropriate Journal to submit a manuscript** while Prof Gutura, focused on **Handling Journal Rejection**. The interactive webinar guided participants through the nuances of academic publishing. Participants gained valuable insights into improving their article writing to meet peer-reviewed journal standards, contributing to the growing body of social work knowledge.

Secondly, the Journal Club Webinar’s event was organised on 14 August 2024 and focused on **Using Zotero Reference Management and the Integration with Google Scholar**. The aim of this webinar was to introduce participants to Zotero Reference Management software. The presenter, Prof John Rautenbach – Head of Department of Social Work at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU), conducted a highly beneficial workshop on using Zotero reference management software. He demonstrated its practical integration with Google Scholar, providing attendees with valuable tools to enhance research and publication efficiency. This workshop proved to be immensely beneficial.

Thirdly, on 09 October 2024, Assoc. Professor Zibonele Zimba – University of Johannesburg (UJ) presented on webinar on **Types of Articles to Write** while Assoc. Professor Tshimagadzo Oscar Magadze University of South Africa (UNISA) presented on the theme **Choosing Between Local or International Journals**. The webinar was well-received, offering invaluable guidance on article types and journal selection for academic publishing.

## 4. ASASWEI Environmental Social Work Special Interest Group (ESW SIG) Webinar

ASASWEI’s Environmental Social Work Special Interest Group has been actively expanding its reach, holding monthly meetings with academics, practitioners, and students across South Africa and the African continent. Firstly, on 22 August 2024, Drs Molly Shayamano and Poppy Masinga co-presented a webinar on **Greening the Social Work Curriculum** to motivate for the integration of environmental social work and disaster management principles, theories and strategies. The aim was to enhance awareness of environmental injustices, climate change and related disasters, and ensure integration of these aspects into the social work curriculum. The

webinar presented contents of a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) workshop that could ideally be presented to practitioners and students.

In addition, the ESW SIG has been part of the establishment of the **Africa Network for Environmental Social Work and Disaster Management (ANESW)**, which was officially launched during the month of September 2024. In partnership with ANESW, the ESW SIG hosted a joint webinar on 26 September 2024 where Prof. Antoinette Lombard presented an engaging and informative session on the topic: **From Voice to Curriculum: Green Social Work in the Context of Disasters**. This collaborative event examined the role of social work education in disaster management, with a focus on fostering resilience and sustainability in vulnerable communities.

## **5. Stakeholders Round Table Discussion**

The ASASWEI President received a letter from a concerned social work veteran pertaining to the declining ethical and professional conduct amongst social workers in South Africa. The colleague raised serious concerns about unethical behaviour, including removing children without proper investigations, ignoring urgent correspondence despite read receipts (in fact not even acknowledging it), making false statements under oath or in court reports (e.g. I have made home visits when they have not). Failure to respond to phone messages from clients and colleagues; poor report writing and using the “Cut and Paste” method from one report to another; lack of interest and motivation; unwillingness to read and keep themselves abreast with new developments, ignorance of the CPD requirements and a lack of independent and critical thinking.

The ASASWEI President and Secretary organised a meeting and set up a small task team involving members from National and Provincial DSD, the NGO sector, social workers in private practice and the South African Association of Social Workers in Private Practice (SASSWIPP) to deliberate and assess the extent of the problem. Consequently, a Round Table Discussion was organised on 18 September 2024 with a focus on **Social Work Professional Practice and Ethical Conduct**. Attendees from the various sectors deliberated on these matters to brainstorm strategies to address the declining state of social work practice and increasing unprofessional conduct. The meeting was well attended, and presentations were made by representatives of academic institutions, National DSD, NGOs and SASWIPP.

Recommendations were made to strengthen professional standards, social work education and to support practitioners. A follow up session is to be organised to continue with the engagements.

## **6. The SACSSP 25th Anniversary Celebration**

On 8 November 2024, the ASASWEI President represented ASASWEI as a key stakeholder delivering a speech at the South African Council of Social Service (SACSSP)'s **25th Anniversary Celebration**. Other EXCO members were invited to join the celebrations virtually due to limited space and Dr. Mmusi, the ASASWEI Treasurer attended the online celebration. The event was held in Centurion with various stakeholders including past presidents of the Council and members of the PBSW; Representatives of National DSD, Representatives of the National Association of Child and Youth Care (NACCW), South African Council for Educators (SACE), South African Council for Pharmacists (SAPC), South African Social Workers in Private Practice (SASWIPP), Social Work Veteran's Association, to name a few.

The President delivered a congratulatory message acknowledging the longstanding partnership between ASASWEI and SACSSP on various projects, the improved services offered to student social workers, and the critical role played by the SACSSP staff. In addition, the message included welcoming and introducing the University of Mpumalanga (UMP) as the newest member of the ASASWEI. The event focused on celebrating the milestones achieved and recognised the council's contributions to elevating and upholding professional standards in South Africa.

## **7. Reflections**

This year, ASASWEI emphasised enhancing collaboration and partnership. On several occasions ASASWEI engaged with various stakeholders as listed below:

- ✓ 18 October 2023 ASASWEI issued a statement to IASSW regarding their lack of action on the Palestine/Israel war;
- ✓ 21 November 2023 ASASWEI wrote a letter of condolence and support to the Gift of the Givers on the devastating death of Ahmed Abbasi, the Head of Gift of the Givers Office in the Gaza region;
- ✓ 14 May 2024 ASASWEI issued a statement on the NPO funding cuts by DSD;
- ✓ 21 June 2024 Mike Batley proposed a partnership with academics to write an article on the relationship between state and civil society in view of the historical NPO funding cuts implemented by DSD;
- ✓ 03 July 2024 we met with Joan Van Niekerk to deliberate on the letter she sent to the President on the unprofessional/unethical behaviour of social workers – discussions culminated in the Round Table Discussion involving relevant stakeholders.
- ✓ 04 August 2024 ASASWEI President's meeting with the newly appointed SACSSP registrar - Mr Hitler Seleka Sekhitla to congratulate them on their appointment and to send a message of support and to strengthen our partnership. The agenda items included Message of support, ASASWEI/SACSSP long standing partnership, ASASWEI Biennial Conferences, CPD Enforcement, Round Table Discussion and Professional Liability Insurance for student social workers;
- ✓ 22 August the President met with the Steering Committee of the Nigerian Association of Social Workers (NASoW) to explore potential opportunities for collaboration.
- ✓ 16 October 2024 ASASWEI Exco met with Health and Welfare Sector Education and Training Authority (HWSETA) to discuss potential funding for Biennial Conference and understand how to access the skills development fund.
- ✓ 06 November 2024 ASASWEI Exco held the first meeting with Provincial DSD HoDs to deliberate on collaboration and partnership in hosting ASASWEI biennial conferences, culminating into the second session scheduled for 21 November 2024;
- ✓ 15 November 2024 EXCO met with HWSETA to understand the processes of accessing skills development funding and how to review and complete the expression of interest forms.

Going forward, ASASWEI will continue to work on increasing the participation of students and social work practitioners, particularly in conferences and webinars as well as workshops, fostering academic discourse, joint research and co-publications, and knowledge/skills sharing. In addition, efforts will be put in place to build new and/or strengthen existing partnerships with local, regional and international counterparts.

Moreover, focused attention will be paid on the on-going indigenising and digitalising of social work while continuing to encourage the integration of environmental social work into curricula - a critical area in the context of climate change and related disasters.

Looking ahead towards 2025 to the end of our term, ASASWEI aims to build on this momentum by expanding sub-projects such as SIGs, Student Association and the Journal Club. EXCO is committed to expand its outreach to various key stakeholders by either introducing new initiatives or reviving the ones that are struggling.

## **8. ASASWEI 2025 International Conference**

EXCO is diligently preparing for the ASASWEI 2025 Conference in collaboration with relevant key stakeholders, which will be held at the University of Free State (UFS) in September 2025. Please join me in congratulating our Deputy President – Associate Professor Mpumelelo Ncube who has secured the bid to host the Biennial ASASWEI International Conference. I am delighted to announce that they have started to mobilise and secure the support from various key stakeholders. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dean Prof Masoga Mogomme, the Academic Advisory Board and all the staff members of the Department of Social Work at the UFS Senate.

ASASWEI is proud to announce that all previous ASASWEI EXCO members who were invited to join as ex-officio members have accepted the invitations. We are pleased that we will leverage on their expert knowledge, experience and willingness to serve. We welcome Dr Varosh Nadesan (PBSW) (UJ), Prof Wim Roestenburg (NWU), Prof John Rautenbach (UNIZULU), Prof Anneline Keet (Nelson Mandela University), Associate Professor Ntembie Bila (UP), and Ms Civil Legodu (DSD) and thank them for their willingness to work alongside the ASASWEI EXCO in planning Conference 2025.

## **9. Accreditation and Endorsement of BSW programme of the Department of Social Work – University of Mpumalanga**

I am pleased to welcome the University of Mpumalanga as a member of ASASWEI under the leadership of Dr Thembelihle Brenda Makhanya - Senior Lecturer and Programme leader for the Discipline of Social Work within the School of Social Sciences.

## **10. Words of Appreciation and Well Wishes**

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the leaders and members of the various SIGs; the ASASWEI Journal Club and all the speakers and presenters for their invaluable contributions to building the social work profession in South Africa. Your dedication continues to shape the future of social work education, research and practice in South Africa and beyond.

Most importantly, I extend my deepest gratitude and appreciation to Dr Peggie Chiwara – the Secretary of ASASWEI for her unparalleled commitment, dedication and efficiency. Your support is beyond measure and is greatly appreciated.

In closing, I sincerely acknowledge the teamwork and dedication of my fellow EXCO members – Associate Prof Mpumelelo Ncube (Deputy President), Dr Fatima Mmusi (Treasurer), Dr Nevashnee Perumal (IASSW Representative) and Dr Peggie Chiwara (Secretary).

On behalf of ASASWEI EXCO, I extend heartfelt gratitude and well wishes to everyone for the upcoming holidays and festivities. We say thank you, re a le boga, siyabonga to all ASASWEI

members from the various institutions, our partners from Government and Non-Government sectors, the SACSSP, HWSETA, and individuals from various other sectors.

Compiled by

Dr Poppy Masinga

ASASWEI President