



South African
Social Workers Association

Towards establishing the (new)

South African Social Workers Association (SASWA)

Thursday, 11 September 2025
Bloemfontein



Outline

- Background
- Why a national association is important
- About SASWA
- Interim constitution
- Logo
- Launch



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BACKGROUND



Background

- *National Association for Social Workers – South Africa (NASW-SA)* was established in **2007** following an *active engagement* with social workers across the country
 - NASW-SA – last AGM and conference was in **September 2013** where a new board was elected
 - Became **inactive** in 2013 with no national or other activities
 - Some provinces and local groups continue to operate as separate local associations

Since 2013 no national association for all social workers

- June 2024 a group of interested social worker from practice, universities and provinces formed a **steering committee**:
 - Work towards establishing and launching a new **national** association.



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WHY IS IT IMPORTANT

Benefits of a national association

- National **unified voice** for the social work profession on matters affecting the profession.
- Promotes the **interest of social work** through engagement and making representations across all sectors, including government and Parliament.
- Advocates for and influences the **shaping and review of policy, legislation and practice** that impact on social workers, their practice as well as the beneficiaries of social work services.
- Ensures that members receive relevant alerts on **events, opportunities and new information** related to the profession.

Benefits of a national association

- Facilitates and supports access to opportunities for **continuing professional development (CPD)**.
- Creates access for its members' participation in **conferences, training and community outreach programs**.
- Provides an organised platform that allows for **networking and connecting with social work colleagues** locally on national matters that concern social work
- Links its membership to participate in international matters that concern social work through the **International Federation for social workers (IFSW)** as well as the IFSW Africa Regional structure.



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ABOUT THE NEW SASWA

Towards a unified voice for social work in South Africa



SASWA: *Vision*

The *South African Social Workers Association (SASWA)* supports, develops and strengthens the social work profession to realise the goals of co-developing reciprocity, co-building peace, co-living with nature, co-creating social justice and co-realising equality, as reflected in the *People's Charter for an Eco-social World*.



SASWA: *Mission*

The *South African Social Workers Association (SASWA)* realises the indivisibility and inter-dependence of **civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights** and is committed to **sustainable eco-social development**. Rooted in *Ubuntu* values and **ethical principles**, the SAASW is dedicated to the co-creation of knowledge and research to promote best practices with communities, organisations, groups, families and individuals that go beyond the remedial to include **prevention, social action, transformational change**, and **human and planetary flourishing**.



SASWA: *Purpose*

The purpose of the *South African Social Workers Association (SASWA)* shall be to promote the interest of the social work profession and represent the common interest its members at a local, provincial, national continental and international level.

SASWA: Objectives

- To strengthen the **self-care, personal mastery and professional capabilities** of social workers who build upon these to contribute to transformative societies and eco-social justice.
- To create and maintain an **engaged and unified national community of social workers and social auxiliary workers** that actively participates in matters affecting them and the profession.
- To increase the **visibility and status of the social work profession** and promote recognition of social workers as frontline workers.
- To promote and support the **participation** of social workers in **policy formulation, review** and **evaluation** through representations in an organised manner.

SASWA: Objectives

- To represent, promote and protect the interest of social workers and social auxiliary workers in partnership with other professional associations in the country and internationally .
- To develop strategies that enable reflexive dialogue, communication and collective advocacy in support of organisational sensitivity and responsiveness to the social work profession, and the people who social workers engage with.
- To promote developmentally-oriented supervision and transformative leadership that counter the negative consequences of new managerialism in day-to-day practice, and that recognise the complexities and ambiguities inherent in social work practice.

SASWA: Objectives

- To establish networks of **collaboration** and **partnerships** at local, regional and global levels to share knowledge, skills and best practices.
- To develop, support and strengthen **collaboration between social work academia and social work practice**.
- To support and strengthen the **decolonisation of social work education, research and practice**.
- To serve as a structured and representative channel **lobbying and advocating** on matters pertaining to the optimal working conditions and salaries to ensure safety, job satisfaction and staff retention as these do impact the quantity, quality and range of social work services

SASWA: Objectives

- To foster **Ubuntu inspired ethics** with inclusivity, respect for the inherent dignity and divinity of humanity, inter-dependencies among human beings and between human beings and other species, participation, solidarity, non-discrimination, respect for diversities, human rights, and eco-social justice at its core.
- To engage collectively in **issue-based advocacy initiatives** that protect and advance the rights of all people, with a particular focus on those who are poor, marginalised, excluded, or oppressed.
- To connect South African social workers with a **global community of social workers** through the SASWAs affiliation with the *International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)*.



SASWA: *Membership*

Who may become members?

- Social workers
- Social auxiliary workers
- Student social workers
- Student social auxiliary workers

registered with the *South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP)*

How to become a member

Database is for the purpose of establishing the SASWA, and the details of membership will be provided for in the SASWA constitution that will be adopted when the new association is launched towards the end of the year.

Once the association is formally established, a membership fee will be applicable. No membership is required now.



SASWA: *Structure*

Principles guiding the structure:

- Maximum **representation**
- Maximum **participation**
- Maximum **opportunity to lead**

SASWA Assembly: highest and collective decision making structure of the of the Association

National Executive Committee: managing and overseeing the day-to-day affairs of the Association

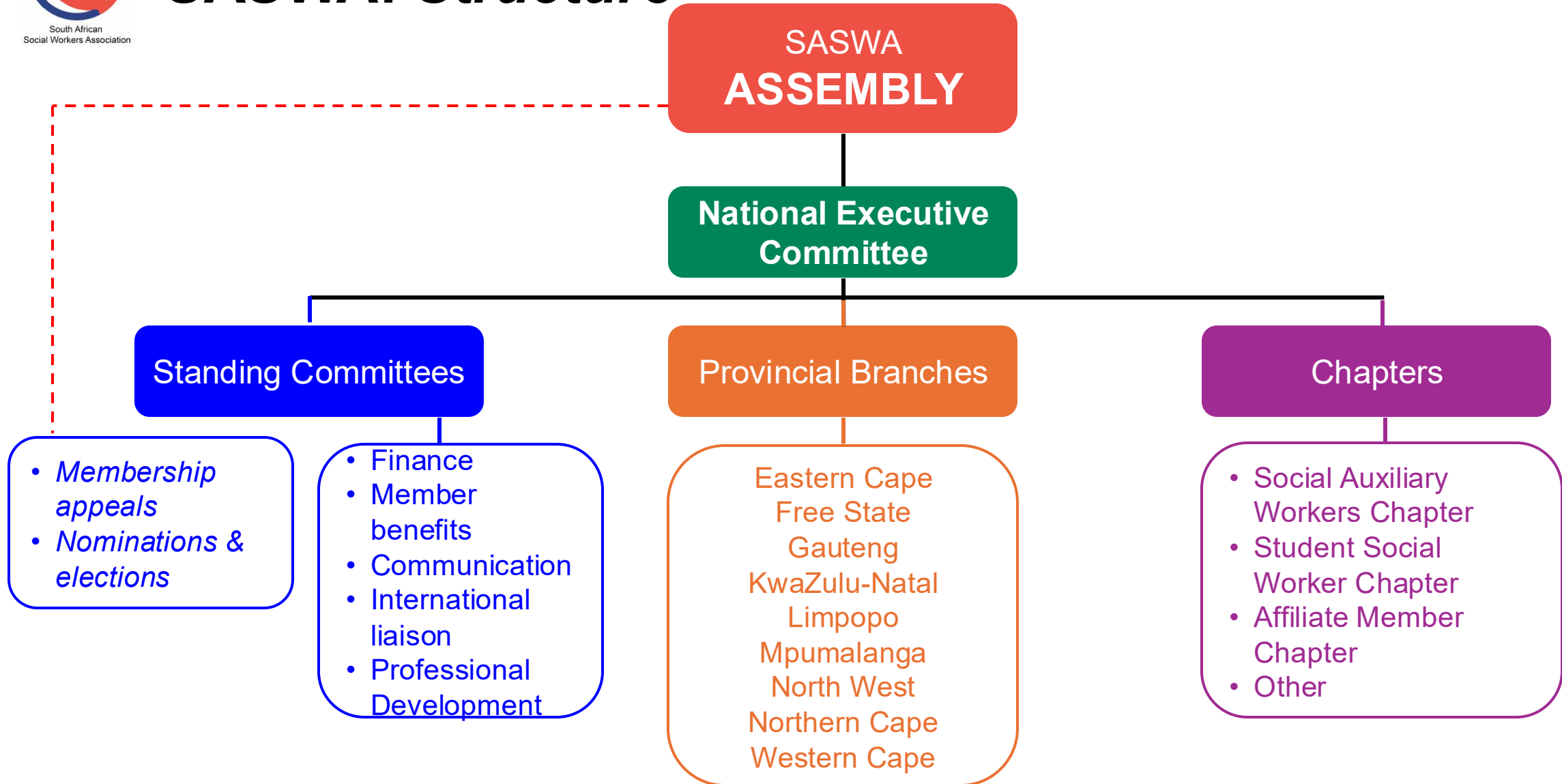
Provincial Branches: decentralised provincial structure

Chapters: sub-structures of SASWA for advancing the interest associate members and affiliate members of the Association

Standing Committees: provide impartial advice, guidance, proposals and recommendations on governance, policy and/or specialised areas



SASWA: Structure





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Interim SASWA CONSTITUTION



Why an interim constitution?

- Potential members know **what to expect**.
- Provide **principles, governance structures and working procedures** while the constitution is finalised for approval by all members.
- Provide for **interim and transitional arrangements**.
- Ensure **accountability** from date the inaugural meeting.

The final constitution will be prepared based on the Interim constitution by the National Executive Committee and approved by the members of the Association.



Principles underpinning the constitution

- Inclusivity
- Representation
- Separation of powers and functions
- Own affairs
- Leadership diversity
- Collaboration and partnering
- Accountability
- Visibility
- Transition and interim arrangements



Organising of the interim constitution

- PART I: Founding provisions
- PART II: Membership
- PART III: Structure and governance
- PART IV: Meetings
- PART V: Advocacy, representation and affiliations
- PART VI: Professional development
- PART VII: Voting, elections and referendums
- PART VIII: Financial governance
- PART IX: Constitutional matters



Text of the interim constitution

- Draft interim constitution is written as a *founding document*.
- The text is comprehensive as all information is included to ensure the logic and intent of the core constitutional principles are followed and agreed on.
- The **final** version will consist of:
 - the main part, i.e., the constitution, which will be much shorter, and
 - a range of annexures, i.e., schedules that will provide for the rules of procures (currently included in the text).



The interim constitution provides for...

- The name, purpose and objectives of SASWA.
- Membership, membership categories, rights, benefits and duties of members.
- Structure of SASWA and accountabilities.
- Governance procedures.
- Financial management and accountability.
- Meetings, quorums and proxies.
- Office bearers, nominations and elections.
- Communication, advocacy, representation and collaboration.
- Professional development and education.
- Liability, dissolutions, amendments and others.

The interim constitution: EXAMPLES

Article 9: MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

- **Regular members**
 - Social workers
 - **Associate members**
 - Social auxiliary workers
 - Student social workers
 - **Affiliate members**
 - Other professional associations for social work
 - ***International members***
 - ***Honorary members***
- Allow for **differentiated** membership, including different membership fees.
 - Main limitation is with regards to **voting rights**, but there are provision of associate members can vote.

The interim constitution: EXAMPLES

Article 9: MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

More about **AFFILIATE MEMBERSHIP**

Affiliate members are other professional associations for social work who wants to participate in the new association.

9.3.1 **Affiliate membership** to the Association has to purpose to enhance coordination, collaboration and joint representation between professional associations of social workers (“professional association”), without compromising the autonomy of any such association.

9.3.2 A professional association for social workers that is duly established and constituted in the Republic of South Africa may upon application become an affiliate member,

The interim constitution: EXAMPLES

Article 18: PROVINCIAL BRANCHES

- *Existing provincial associations* provided for and transition to SASWA.
- *New provincial branches* and representation.
- Principle of *provincial affairs*.
- Own Provincial Branch Committee.
- Report to National Executive Committee
- Represented on the National Executive Committee

18.3.1 Any provincial association for social workers that was in place on the date of adoption of the constitution shall be deemed to be the Provincial Branch of SAASW for that province, subject to the following conditions:...

The interim constitution: EXAMPLES

Article 19: CHAPTERS

- Inclusion and active participation of associate and affiliate members
- Deal with “own affairs” and unique needs
- Own governance structure
- Report to National Executive Committee
- Represented on the National Executive Committee

Social Auxiliary
Worker Chapter

Student Social Worker
Chapter

Affiliate Member
Chapter

Other Chapters

The interim constitution: EXAMPLES

Article 32: COLLABORATION WITH OTHER ASSOCIATIONS

32.1 The Association shall encourage and actively seek collaboration and partnerships with other professional associations in the country as a principal approach of the Association in the interest of its members and the profession.

- Recognise as a **principle** and **principal approach** that there are other professional associations for social work.
- Emphasise the **value** and **importance** of collaboration and coordination.
- Focus on **common goals** and **issues** for **SOCIAL WORK**.

The interim constitution: **EXAMPLES**

Article 43: ALLOWANCES AND REIMBURSEMENTS

- **No entitlement** to allowances for office bearers.
- Strict **conditions** of reimbursement.

43.4 An office bearer may under such circumstances and conditions as agreed to by SAASW Assembly during an Annual General Meeting, subject to the prior approval of the National Executive Committee, be reimbursed for the following *actual* expenses if he or she has been duly designated or elected to represent the Association:

The interim constitution: **EXAMPLES**

Article 57: TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

- Measures that apply for the **transition** from the *Steering Committee* to the newly elected *National Executive Committee*.
 - It ensures a smooth transition and **start** of the new Association
1. Steering Committee
 2. Inaugural meeting
 3. Adoption of the Interim Constitution
 4. Nomination and election of 1st National Executive Committee
 5. Reports and records
 6. Communication
 7. Provincial branches
 8. Funding obtained prior to launch
 9. Membership and membership fees
 10. Term of office harmonising
 11. Other transitional arrangements
 12. Automatic repeal of Article 57



The interim constitution: NEXT STEPS

Article 57: TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

- Final draft of Interim constitution will be shared for comments.
- All comments by 22 September 2025.
- Final draft Interim constitution be finalised by 15 October 2025 and send in advance to all who confirm for the launch, so that they have it in advance.

The interim constitution to be adopted at the inaugural meeting when SASWA is launched and will be in full force until a final constitution is adopted by the SASWA Assembly.



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THE LOGO



About the SASWA logo

Designed *pro bono*.

Selected from a number of options.

Reflects social work in South Africa.



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Meaning behind the design of the SASWA logo

1

- **HANDS:** A hand or hands are universally associated with **helping, support, enabling, guidance.**
- The **THREE HANDS** provide multiple symbolism associated with social work.
 - Each hand represents 1 of the 3 **primary methods of social work:** *casework*; *group work*; and *community work*.
 - Each hand represents **what social work stands for:** *social justice*; *human rights*; and *sustainable development*.
 - Each hand represents 1 of the 3 **characteristics of a profession:** *academic discipline* (evidence, continuous learning, qualifications, competence); *practice orientated*; and *ethically directed*.
- The **CONTINUING CIRCULAR FLOW** of the hands is used to reflect:
 - the *principles of developmental social work* of multiple interconnected interventions that *empower, develop capability and supports self-reliance*; and
 - also represents **unity and strength.**
- The **OUTER CIRCLE** represents the **globe** and the *connectivity* of social work in South Africa to the **international community of social workers** and beyond.



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Meaning behind the design of the SASWA logo

- The **HANDS AROUND MAP** of the country represents the important principles of **inclusion** (persons with disabilities, other persons that may be excluded) as well as **non-discrimination**.
- The **YELLOW SUNLIKE CIRCLE** represents **hope** and **optimism** as well as **creativity**, **innovation** and **wisdom**.
- The use of the **COLOURS** drawn from the same colour code as the South African flag: the *different colours* represents **diversity**; and strong colours of hands represents **confidence**, **leadership** and **pride**.
- The **COMBINATION** of the *continuing circle*, *hands holding the map of the country* and the *bold colours* reflect **unity** and **strength in diversity**.
- The **SIMPLICITY** (using bold colours, easy to read typography and only using lines for map of country) of the design reflects on the values of **respect**, **dignity** and **selflessness**, while also ensuring that the SASWA logo is easily *recognisable*.
- The **NAME OF THE ASSOCIATION** – South African Social Workers Association – is placed *beneath* the symbols of the logo to reflect **upliftment**, **stability** (foundation), **representation**, and **protection**.



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TOWARDS THE LAUNCH

Towards a unified voice for social work in South Africa



Towards a new national association

LAUNCH

Planned **20 November 2025**
at the Future Africa at
University of Pretoria

PROPOSED NAME

South African Social Workers
Association (SASWA)



South African
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More information about the new SASWA

Scan this **QR code** to download the **INFORMATION BROCHURE** regarding the launch of the **new** *South African Social Workers Association (SASWA)*





The launch is soon

SAVE THE DATE

Launch of new association (SASWA):

20 November 2025

at the ***Future Africa at University of Pretoria***

More information will follow soon.



Get involved

Scan the QR code and complete the **Google Form** and join the database so that updates can be shared.

Email us at:

socialworkassociationsa@gmail.com





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QUESTIONS/ COMMENTS



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THANK YOU

Compassion in practice, strength in unity

Towards a unified voice for social work in South Africa