



North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW)
PO Box 121; Botsford, CT 06404 *** Phone/Fax (tollfree): 888.426.4712
Email: info@nacsW.org *** Website: <http://www.nacsW.org>

"A Vital Christian Presence in Social Work"

**NACSW MISSIONARY ASSIGNMENT IN AFRICA: EXPLORING
THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF NACSW IN INTEGRATING AND
MODELING CONGREGATIONAL SOCIAL WORK PARADIGM
INTO SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA FAITH COMMUNITIES AND
SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMS**

By: Christson A. Adedoyin, MSW (ABD)

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NACSW Missionary Assignment in Africa: Exploring the strategic role of NACSW in integrating and modeling Congregational social work paradigm into sub-Saharan Africa Faith Communities and social work programs.

**Christson A. Adedoyin, MSW (ABD)
Doctoral Candidate
College of Social Work
University of Kentucky**

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Learning Objectives

Following this workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Understand the emerging role of congregations in addressing social problems (e.g. HIV/AIDS, Poverty, Malaria, domestic violence, children & women trafficking e.t.c) in Sub-Saharan Africa.
2. Recognize the psycho-social, spiritual and economic factors that motivate people in sub-Saharan Africa to embrace faith-based communities or initiatives and how this can be positively explored.
3. Identify a new conceptual model and the potentials for capacity building and “missionary” opportunities for NACSW members and institutions that could mentor African congregations and social work programs.
4. Appreciate social and community development models of interventions in helping communities in Africa and the role of faith-based organizations in these models.
5. Explore academic or church collaborations, field-based practicum, and exchanges with congregations involved in social service provisions and social work programs in Africa.
6. Articulate several roles that the NACSW and its members can play in achieving the mandate of the great commission in communities, congregations and social work programs in Africa.

Brief Socio-economic, Demographic and Religious Statistics about Africa



- The African Continent is the second largest and second most populous continent. It has 54 countries.
- The population of Africa is estimated as 967 Million people(Population Reference Bureau 2008)
- The World Bank estimates that the average GNI per capita for an average African Country is \$765 per year. Africa's GDP is 2.8% of World GDP(IMF and World Bank 2005)
- 36.2% live on less than \$2 per day (W. Bank 2005)
- 90% of the 1-3 million malaria deaths occur in Africa (i.e. 2 deaths per min and 2700/day), affecting mostly children. (CDC and Malaria Facts 2009).
- HIV/AIDS prevalence is 6.1% in Africa compared to world average of 1%; and total HIV cases is 24.5million. Total AIDS death in 2005 was 2 million out of 2.8 million worldwide (UNAIDS, 2006).
- Christians are estimated to be 45.9% of Africa's population, and Muslims forming 40.5%. African traditional religion make up 12.3%. Others are 1.3 %.(World Christian Encyclopedia, 2001)
- There is an estimated 360 million Christians in Africa as of year 2000 , from little over 9 million in 1900. As of 2006, 147 million of Africa Christians were Pentecostals and Charismatic (Christianity Today, 2007; Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2006).

Formal and Informal Social Welfare Program interventions in most African Countries (Some Characteristics)

Informal/Communal

- Traditional African filial obligation and sense of responsibility to care for family members (The paradigm of It takes a village.....)
- Indigenous knowledge and practices use to intervene in social problems (e.g. mental illness)
- Community/Kin network responsiveness to array of social problems (e.g. domestic violence, dispute resolution, poverty)
- However, this structure is threatened by western education, rural-urban migration and globalization

Formal/Public

- Social programs, services and interventions are provided by different tiers of government.
- Modeled after Western Social Welfare system (Anucha, 2008)
- Usually under funded, under-utilized and not culturally appropriate
- Under-staffed and not fully professionalized
- Considered an option of last resort when informal type is not available or not sufficient to address problem

Emerging Role of Congregations in Social Service Provision and Programs

Precipitating Factors

1. Inadequacy and near-collapse of the informal & formal programs.
2. Exponential growth in congregations and religiosity.
3. Surge in social problems (poverty, HIV, infant and maternal deaths)
4. Expansion of churches' ministries to social issues/problems (HIV, poverty, education e.t.c)
5. Involvement of congregations in public and social discussion/policy.
6. Responsiveness to Biblical teachings on social justice, congregational welfare and care for the under-privileged (Matthew 25:34-46; Acts 2: 44-47).
7. Embrace of Prosperity and social gospel from the West.
8. Psycho-social fulfillment, support and messages now focus of churches.
9. Reciprocity and congregational responsiveness to members plights.
10. Conscious/unconscious realization of "*spiritual capital*".
11. Dependence and absolute trust in supernatural intervention by congregants
12. Demand by congregants to their leaders.. In view of leaders prosperity.
13. Others...

NACSW missional opportunities in the emerging African congregational social work setting

In view of the afore-mentioned, the following are missional opportunities for the NACSW in Congregational social work in Africa:

1. The presence of an “army” of untrained Christians who envision social justice and social change for the continent’s social problems.
2. Substantial increase in the number of Christian Universities in Africa. For example in Nigeria, at least 10 new Christian universities were established in the last 7 years and none has a program in social work! NACSW can mentor /help model new social work programs in these new Christian universities.
3. Public universities in Africa are expanding and establishing more social work programs. Opportunity to integrate faith/congregational social work into their curriculum and research agenda is now more readily available than before.
4. Midwife a new generation of professionalized congregational social programs with mega-churches.
5. Help jump-start, train, establish an association of Christian social workers in Africa. This will in turn help influence social and public policy.
6. Redefine social work education in a continent with huge spiritual capital. This will enable prospective social work students to see social work as a calling and vocation.
7. Staff and students’ exchange/field placements combined with missionary trips for NACSW institutions, professors and students with a burden or call to Africa.
8. Others...

Conceptual Strategies to Facilitate NACSW Missional assignment in Africa

To facilitate NACSW missional assignment in Africa, I propose the following conceptually:

1. Establish a Special Interest Group (SIG) among NACSW members of African origin to think on how NACSW can work in Africa.
2. Seek and build partnership with Christian universities especially and public universities in Africa about faith-based social work programs and curriculum development.
3. Online mentoring, training and conferencing with Christian institutions in Africa.
4. Explore institutional exchange(s) for professors and/or students, campus visits, and field placements/mission trips.
5. NACSW members involvement in research and seeking funding projects that are focused on Africa.
6. Maximize and extend the existing bond/relationship between frontline congregations (e.g. Methodist, Baptists) to their new universities in Africa, e.g. Baptist Universities in Nigeria.
7. Utilize NACSW's connection with international christian NGOs to develop programs and interventions with communities and congregations in Africa.
8. Invite identified mega-church leaders, university officials to future NACSW conventions. This will help show-case research of christians in social work and some faith-based EBPs. Seeing is believing!
9. Subsidized membership of the NACSW for professors, students and institutions from Africa.
10. Others....

Theoretical Frameworks for this missional partnership

- Social Development Approach
- Community-based Participatory approach
- Capability Approach
- Empowerment theory
- Spiritual Capital theory

Implications for Social Work Practice

- Discussion will focus on implications as it relates to :
 1. Christians in social work and their calling
 2. Social work profession generally
 3. Rebranding and growth of Social work profession and practice, social policy formulation, social welfare programs and social work education in sub-Saharan Africa.
 4. Others...

Food for Thought....

- Reflect on this statement...

“Some experts tell about the shift of Christianity's center of gravity from the European industrialized nations to Africa, Asia and Latin America in modern time. Yale University historian Lamin Sanneh stated, that "African Christianity was not just an exotic, curious phenomenon in an obscure part of the world, but that African Christianity might be the shape of things to come" [Christianity Today Magazine, 2007]. The statistics from the World Christian Encyclopedia (David Barrett) illustrate the emerging trend of dramatic Christian growth on the continent and supposes, that in 2025 there will be 633 million Christians in Africa”
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_Africa)

- *Would the NACSW and you as a member of NACSW be a major player in actively involved in influencing and designing the eventual shape of (christian social work education) “things” to come?*

Thanks for your attention !!!

Christson Adedoyin, MSW (ABD)

Christson.ade@uky.edu

