

Initiative of Social Work Professional Association

Professional Associations in Social work and Kerala Social Work Congress by KAPS

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The professional social workers in Kerala (KAPS- Kerala Association of Professional Social Workers) witnessed a significant gathering of Social Workers last year at BCM College Kottayam. After its formation in 2012, KAPS has initiated this platform for professional social workers to come together and share their field experience. The program was conducted along with the 14th edition of the conference and students' meet (Samanwaya) series organized by the Social Work department. The event has been organized in association with International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) Asia Pacific and India Network of Professional Social Work Associations (INPSWA).

A Professional Association

A professional association (also called a professional body, professional organization, or professional society) is usually a nonprofit organization seeking to further a particular profession, the interests of individuals engaged in that profession and the public interest. The roles of professional associations may vary in different countries and have been variously defined: "A group of people in a learned occupation who are entrusted with maintaining control or oversight of the legitimate practice of the occupation;" also a body acting "to safeguard the public interest;" organizations which "represent the interest of the professional practitioners," and so "act to maintain their own privileged and powerful position as a controlling body."

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The professional body may have a number of functions. They may:

- Set and assess professional examinations
- Provide support for Continuing Professional Development through learning opportunities and tools for recording and planning
- Publish professional journals or magazines
- Provide networks for professionals to meet and discuss their field of expertise
- Issue a Code of Conduct to guide professional behaviour
- Deal with complaints against professionals and implement disciplinary procedures
- Be enabling fairer access to the professions, so that people from all backgrounds can become professionals.
- Provide career support and opportunities for students, graduates and people already working.

The mission of the professional societies is primarily educational and informational. Their influence flows from their continuing and highly visible functions: to publish professional journals, to develop professional excellence, to raise public awareness, and to make awards. Through their work, they help to define and set standards for their professional fields and to promote high standards of quality through awards and other forms of recognition.

An active professional association is a need for any profession. Growth of a profession has many dimensions. At one level it aims at the development of profession. This has many components like improving knowledge, practicing existing knowledge, testing of methods and tools in new areas, sharing of knowledge among the practitioners, training, documentation, networking etc. At the same time, a professional association needs to take care of the job security and other job related issues of its professionals and intervene whenever necessary. A profession association grow only when the practitioners consider association it as a part of the profession itself.

Associations for Professional Social Workers

Like any other profession, Associations for professional social workers exist in all the countries where social work training is happening and social work being treated as a profession. Looking worldwide, the important associ-

ations for professional social workers are:

- International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)
- National Association of Social Workers (American)
- Australian Association of Social Workers
- British Association of Social Workers
- Institute of Medical Social Workers (British)
- Canadian Association of Social Workers

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) is a global organisation initiated in 1928 at the first International Conference of Social Work, held in Paris in 1928. This landmark gathering, attended by over 2400 delegates from 42 countries, also resulted in the establishment of two partner organizations, The International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW). IFSW strive for social justice, human rights and social development through the promotion of social work, best practice models and the facilitation of international cooperation. IFSW supports its 116 country members by providing a global voice for the profession. IFSW has been granted Special Consultative Status by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). In addition, IFSW is working with the World Health Organization (WHO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). It carryout the operation in five regions viz. Africa, Asia & Pacific, Europe, Latin America and North America. Ms. Ruth Stark is the present global president of IFSW and Rory Truell is the Secretary-General. It's a need for every Social Work associations to get attached to IFSW.

The International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) is the worldwide organization of schools of social work and educators. The IASSW in collaboration with IFSW has adopted a revised Global Definition of Social Work, a Declaration of Ethical Principles for Social Work and Global Standards for Education and Training of the Social Work Profession. In 2012, IFSW, ICSW and IASSW have committed to the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development, a statement of policy priorities and agenda for action globally and locally. This document guides the work of the association's

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representatives with the United Nations in New York and Geneva.

National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has a community of over 132,000 members. NASW has the mission of enhancing its members' professional growth and advancing sound social advocacy policies.

Professional Social Workers Association in Kerala & India

In India, there are many associations for professional social workers in different regions and states. However India was not a member of IFSW till 2015. In accordance with the IFSW constitution, only one member per country representing social work nationally can join the Federation. When there is more than one professional association or organisation in a country, they need to form an agreement to work together and democratically share their IFSW membership and single vote.

Difficulties in the past for India's admission into IFSW included that there have been multiple social work associations separated by geographical challenges and the absence of single association that represent the whole country. However, in 2015 six Indian professional associations met to form a new India wide organisation's network that created a new level of national social work unity and paved the way for admission into IFSW. India was successfully admitted into full IFSW membership on the application from The India Network of Professional Social Work Association (INPSWA).

The INPSWA members are:

- Indian Society of Professional Social Workers, founded in 1970.
- The National Association of Professional Social Workers, founded in 2014.
- The Karnataka Association of Professional Social Workers, founded in 1977.
- Kerala Association of Professional Social Workers, founded 2013.
- Professional Social Workers Association, founded 2004.
- Bombay Association of Trained Social Workers founded, in 1989.

INPSWA has the provision for including more state wise associations to get affiliated to IFSW, since IFSW accept only one association as its member from a country.

Kerala Association of Professional Social Workers (KAPS) was formed in

the year 2012 and registered in 2013. Since then the association has been involved in efforts for the development of the profession. It has district chapters in all the 14 districts of Kerala. KAPS is governed by State office bearers (President, General Secretary, Treasurer, Vice President and Joint Secretary). It has a governing body comprise of 14 elected members from all 14 districts of Kerala State and few nominated members. State Management committee consists of President, Secretary and Treasurer from all 14 districts. Along with programs for development of social work profession, KAPS has initiated three major programs for bringing the Social Work fraternity and students together: (i) Social Work Students Congress (ii) Observation of World Social Work Day (iii) Kerala Social Work Practitioners Congress.

The first social work practitioners congress was organized in Nov 2016 at BCM College, Kottayam. The program was inaugurated by Prof. Mariko Kimura, Vice President, International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). In her inaugural address Prof. Mariko covered the need to be vigilant against drug abuse among children and role to be played by Social Workers in this. She also emphasised the need for all social workers to come together for the growth of profession. H.G Mar Mathew Moolakkatt, Arch Bishop, Arch Diocese of Kottayam presided over. Dr.Ipe Varghese, HOD, Dept.of Social Work &Gen.Secretary KAPS, Fr.Dr.Prasanth Palakkappillil (President, KAPS & Principal, S.H College, Thevara), Mr.Sriganesh M.V (Secretary General, India Network of Professional Social Work Associations – INPSWA), Sr.Betsy (Principal in-charge, BCM College), Fr. Philmon Kallathra and Prof. Gandhi Doss (President, India Network of Professional Social Work Associations – INPSWA) and Mr.Visak Mohan have addressed the gathering at different times during the Psw Congress. Mr.Sriganesh MV has presented the achievements of profession in India and the initiatives for bringing all the organizations in India together with INPSWA and becoming a member of IFSW. The practitioners had very good interaction with IFSW Vice President, INPSWA President and Secretary General. Later the participants have discussed some of the problems faced by the professionals and decided to intervene in those matters. The participants included Social Workers from different associations from India and abroad.

Honouring Professionals: The Social Work congress honoured two professional Social Workers Mr. Subhash TV (SDM, Tirur) and Mr. Anu S Nair (ADM, Pathanamthitta) who could make good achievements in their career as civil servants.

Academic sessions

The theme set for Psw congress was 'Sharing experience in Social Work practice'. In the academic sessions 12 social work practitioners made presentations based on their practice experiences on following topics:

1. Social Work Intervention in Practice to Ensure A Drug-Free Childhood - Bobby Varghese and Miss. Lima Ponnachan
2. Dimension Enhancing the Vulnerability of Children in Slum Pockets for Substance Abuse. -Thangadurai. P & Rangasami.P
3. Social work interventions in practice to ensure a Drug-free childhood: -Alishya Susan Poulouse& Melvin B Netto.
4. A Intervention Model for Drug Abuse among Children. - John Colins Johny&Priya Anna James
5. Family- A Way to Protect Children from Drug Abuse: Sangeetha.P
6. A Comparative Analysis of the Consumption of Narcotics Among Adolescents in Rural and Urban Areas and Effectiveness of Support System in Educational Institutions: Jolly K James & Elizabeth Alexander
7. Social Work Intervention to Ensure Drug Free Childhood: Binee Wilson
8. Drug Abuses among College students :Sr. Betsy & Sradtha Johney
9. Social Group Work: An effective tool for drug free childhood. - Rose Mari yaSyriac & GibimolBabu
11. Drug Addiction among Children: Intervention at School Level. - Parvathy Suresh & Reshma V.R
12. Social Work Interventions to Reduce Drug Abuse among Children. - : Paul John Varghese

Meeting of students and teachers' representatives

A meeting of the teachers and student representatives from various social work institutions was held as part of the congress. This meeting has discussed different concerns the profession face and need for strengthening the profession. The representatives had a meaningful interaction with the international and national leaders during the session. The members have shared their in-

tention to continue the theme ie. Social Work intervention against drug abuse among children of the conference in their respective schools.

Cultural Infotainment Program

Samanwaya Sandya, the cultural infotainment program was inaugurated by Sri. DilishPothan (Director, Malayalam cine film). Mr. Shynoj OV, an alumni of BCM directed the show titled "God Father". The show was a message against drug abuse among children. About 160 participants comprising all faculty members and students of department of social work, students from other departments, children from children's home, children's village Pampady, St. John of God Centre, Velloor, Santhwanam Gandinagar and Thirubalabhavan Uzhavoor have participated in the two hours long show.

Conclusion

The initiative of KAPS organizing Social Workers Congress in Kerala was successful in bringing the professionals in to platform and share their success stories and concerns. The presence of international and national leaders have taken the professional identity of the participants into new heights.

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Familiarize Agency:

Sanjivani Psychosocial Rehabilitation Centre, Nedumkunnam, Kottayam Dt., Kerala

“No child of God should die alone, unloved and uncared”- Mother Theresa

Sanjivani Psychosocial Rehabilitation Centre was found in 1993. The founder of the organization is Rev. Dr. Antony Mannarkulam. Sanjivani is the first community based rehabilitation centre for the mentally ill in Kerala. Fr. Antony met Mother Theresa and she gave the idea and motivation of establishing the organization at Nedumkunnam in 1992. The space area was donated by Forane parish of Nedumkunnam. Sanjivani is a charitable Trust registered in India (Reg. No. K-21/94). The Archbishop of Changanassery is the patron and president. Sanjivani is a true sign of compassionate love of God. It accommodates 180 residents at a time; this is a home away from home. It offers training program for mental health professionals. Now 70 members are residing in Sanjivani.

Vision: Vision of Sanjivani is ‘Care and share’.

Objectives: The Objectives of the Sanjivani Psychosocial Rehabilitation Centre:

- To rehabilitate the mentally ill.
- To provide lifelong staying facility for abandoned people
- To provide training for mental health professionals.
- To provide rehabilitative service to the unprivileged section of the society.

Activities of Sanjivani

Sanjivani Walk in Clinic: Sanjivani walk in clinic provides the following services all the five working days.

- Screening of the mentally challenged
- Psychiatric consultation
- Various types of psychotherapies