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## **Contextualization of social work education and its trajectory in the Southwest State: The role of the University of Southern Somalia**

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### **Abstract**

This paper presents findings of pioneer field work on social work (SW) in the context of Somali Studies, particularly social work education and research in the Southwest State of Somalia (SWSS). It explores the role the University of Southern Somalia has taken as the leading higher education institution in the SWSS and its inspiration to introduce SW education in the State. As the first ever scholarly study on SW in SWSS, this work aims to spur a new path in both education and research among scholars and professionals engaged in social work. It also contributes to the growing body of literature on social work research by portraying some of the challenges prevailing in the SWSS that make the introduction of social work education and preparation of SW professionals necessary in the quest for remedial mechanisms to alleviate them.

**Keywords:** Baidoa, social work education, social work practice, UNICEF, University of Southern Somalia

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### **Introduction**

#### **Social Work Education: An Overview**

Social work has been described in diverse ways and with different taxonomies that culminate with a unified objectivity. One such source explains social work as “a profession that began its life as a call to help the poor, the destitute and the disenfranchised of a rapidly changing social order” (McNutt 2008:138) <sup>[24]</sup>. A global definition endorsed by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) in their General Assembly of 2014 defines social work as:

...a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing (ISFW 2014) <sup>[14]</sup>.

Basing on the objective of its practice and a professional perspective, McNutt (2008:138) <sup>[24]</sup> avers, “Social work practice is the primary means of achieving the profession’s ends.” A section of scholars attempt to problematize the question of what constitutes social work and what the profession stands for—hence extending its depth and breadth with a critical look (Hugman, 2010; Olson, 2007; Payne, 2005; Kjellberg, 2022) <sup>[12, 28, 29, 17]</sup>. Inger Kjellberg, quoting Payne (2005) <sup>[29]</sup> contextualizes social work as: “...both a practice-based profession and an academic discipline, which is mainly concerned with a large range of social problems such as poverty, homelessness, drug abuse, criminality and violence against vulnerable groups (Kjellberg 2022:149) <sup>[17]</sup>. Further delineating the subject, Kjellberg states, “Poverty is a primary subject of research and the social deprivation associated with it is of great concern to social workers (2022:149).

### **Literature Review**

#### **Concept of Social Work**

From a micro-level perspective, scholars believe that social work emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century by tracing its origins to charity organizations, while from a macro-level point of view it is described as a movement with a radical political perspective (Hugman 2010; Olson 2007; Bhatt & Sanyaal 2019) <sup>[12, 28, 6]</sup>. Payne (2005) <sup>[29]</sup> associates the emergence of the macro-level aspect of social work with what is termed the Settlement Movement in which the learned and the wealthy among the society decided to settle away from the high-end areas and live and work among the poor. Similarly, Hugman (2010) <sup>[12]</sup> argues that the theory behind this movement was that the wealthy class possessed social resources that could be spread outward to the whole community, with the intent of helping everybody living in the underprivileged areas to develop capacities to improve their own lives and resolve social problems.

The preceding definitions inform the trajectory the concept of social work has taken over the years. In particular, they shed light on the fact that the evolution of social work has occurred as a result of observations and interpretations of the social dynamics that have been developed and debated across the span of time (Spitzer *et al.* 2014; Gray *et al.* 2010; McDonald *et al.* 2003) <sup>[15, 20, 11, 23]</sup>. Available literature indicates that the extent to which experts and scholars focused on the advancement of social work practice is influenced by the context of their spatial and temporal environment (Gitterman, Knight, and Germain 2021, 4<sup>th</sup> edition) <sup>[9]</sup>—while aiming, in certain cases, to generalize the explanation to meet and respond to a global audience (Gray and Coates 2010) <sup>[11]</sup>.

### Contextualizing Social Work in Africa

While definitions and theories of social work overlap, an Africanist scholar of social work may claim the absence of African theories from the field as leading to a misconception mediated through the dominance of Western theories. Therefore, in order to address biases therein, particularly when viewed through the African lens, readings such as the theory of Nkrumaism as published on the website of the African Social Work Network (<https://africasocialwork.net/>) and others by Twikirize, Wairire, Mabeyo etc. would deepen the understanding of social work in the African setup. An interactive reading, as compared to a parallel reading, of theories and practice from Africa and the West as well as other parts of the world, not only contributes to the richness but also cross fertilizes the field. Ani (1994:2, qtd in Kreitzer 2012:74) <sup>[18]</sup> cautions: “You have to teach Pan-African studies alongside European studies so people will understand the assumptions behind each. This is demanded by an African-centered view because we are Africans and because the future towards which Europe leads us is genocidal.”

Suspensions and biases can be alleayed by encouraging mutual intelligibility of theories and practices from all sides in an interactive environment rather than dominance, imposition, or prescriptive notions irrelevant to a given cultural environment. By this principle, the African social work professional overcomes the shortcomings created by Westerner scholars against African society in order to “limit the creativity of their vision, destroying their ability to act with will and intent and in their own interest” (Ani 1994:1, cited in Kreitzer 2012:74) <sup>[18]</sup>. Ani’s argument imbibes from a conception that the traditional practice of social work in the West, on the one hand, and the professionalization of its practice in the African continent, on the other, need not only to be discussed within the different framework of their socio-cultural theories but according to their essential differences in values, customs, histories, cultures, functional features and roles.

The notion of contextualization expressed here is not in any circumstance intended to promote a radical concept that runs counter to the scholarly borrowing of SW related theories from Western literature (Twikirize 2014) <sup>[15, 20]</sup>—though at times short of addressing the African context—but that the values and practices of the indigenous deserve to be unlocked to transcend the local by interacting with the global (Crisp 2017; McDonald *et al.* 2003) <sup>[7, 23]</sup>. The function of practical social work in the context of what is Western, can be observed akin to what Midgley (1981) <sup>[25]</sup> called ‘professional imperialism’—meaning, the uncritical imposition of Western theories, concepts and methods on countries of the Global South. If such a dominant concept is encouraged and maintained, the profession may experience pitfalls similar to those encountered by the post-colonial political elite who uncritically adopted and emulated Western political systems of governance with little consideration to indigenous systems of social/communal culture and customs. Adaptation of that concept in an uncondusive social work environment and education absent of indigenous input (Gray and Coates 2010) <sup>[11]</sup>, eventually render ineffective the response to the challenges the African continent is engaged with in its multiple social spheres.

That said, the idea of teaching indigenous SW education in modern classrooms has its history in recent times, unlike the centuries-old of its practice in the African culture (Spitzer *et al.* 2014) <sup>[15, 20]</sup>. A perspective with an African focus permits us “to advocate for a paradigm shift towards a developmental approach to social work by contextualizing it to suit the needs of the local people and address the impediments that hinder the transitioning process” (Mundau and Zvomuya 2021:159) <sup>[27]</sup>—hence allowing for an effective “process of transcultural negotiation,” to take place (Bhabha 2008:232) <sup>[5]</sup>.

As Spitzer acknowledges, “The profession is challenged to critically analyze structural problems in society and to search for meaningful concepts to address them” (Spitzer 2019:570) <sup>[31]</sup>. Without critical analysis, Spitzer seems to challenge us, society runs the risk of producing what Ahmed (1995) <sup>[4]</sup> had observed elsewhere as mere “graduates” but “not intellectuals”. In his writing, Ahmed, a literary critic and scholar of comparative literature and global culture, was referring to a category of intellectuals he critiqued for being “docile” scholars unable to observe their environment critically and beyond Western writing.

The lack of intellectual and critical analysis of what constitutes the social work profession in Africa can partially be attributed to several insufficiencies the continent is facing. After spending a considerable period of time teaching and researching in institutions in the continent, Spitzer shares his sentiments:

What I have observed in my mzungu years in East Africa is that most schools of social work in the region share similar constraints such as lack of qualified staff, insufficient resources and inadequate infrastructure, lack of appropriate teaching material and literature, and limited capacities for lecturers to conduct research and engage in academic activities (Spitzer 2019:571) <sup>[31]</sup>.

Spitzer, like Ahmed discussing in the context of socio-cultural and socio-political domain as mentioned above, challenges the continent to address the shortcomings in the SW education and professional practice so as to enhance scholarship with a critical approach that problematizes the discipline from multiple aspects. This is not to undermine the prevalent debate in SW education and professional practice (Hugman, 2010; Olson, 2007;

Payne, 2005)<sup>[12, 28, 29]</sup>, but that with adequately trained professionals the continent stands a better chance of moving the indigenous knowledgebase machine forward. Focus, among other factors, is to be laid on understanding the two distinct projects Olson (2007)<sup>[28]</sup> describes as: the social justice project, which seeks to transform the conditions of human suffering; and the professional project, with its focus on achieving legitimacy within a competitive professional system.

### **The Teaching of Social Work Education in Africa**

Although Eno *et al.* (2022)<sup>[8]</sup> maintain “the nascence of social work education in Somalia” as a very recent project started in 2018, they nevertheless indicate that the practice of traditional social work was in the cultural vein of the Somali people in its ‘informal’ setting much before either the spread of Islam into the Horn of Africa or the arrival of European colonialism into the country. As Eno *et al.* (2022)<sup>[8]</sup> highlight, Somali’s social work education program was born as a result of a consorted effort of several agencies in a project whose funding, coordination and overall success is spearheaded by UNICEF Somalia (Eno *et al.* 2022)<sup>[8]</sup>. However, in Uganda, social work training began earlier than Somalia’s independence in 1960. According to Twikirize (2014)<sup>[15, 20]</sup>, formal social work education in Uganda came with the establishment of the Nsamizi Training Institute for Social Development in 1952 with a mandate to prepare clerical officers in the social sector of the colonial government. In the context of building a broader vision of the social work profession, in 1963 training in social welfare, community development and social administration was commenced at Makerere University, which prides itself for developing the program to the vibrant Department of Social Work and Social Administration (SWSA). In many aspects, therefore, Makerere University’s degree course in 1969 and the establishment of the SWSA Department, interprets the evolution SW education has been undergoing in the East Africa Region and by far the continent as a whole (Twikirize 2014)<sup>[15, 20]</sup>.

In Kenya, formal or professional social work education was established in 1962 at the Kenya-Israel School of Social Work, before relocating the program to Kabete Institute of Public Administration which offered diploma study; while the first social work degree course was started in 1976 at the University of Nairobi (Wairire, 2014)<sup>[15, 20, 35, 38]</sup>. In Tanzania, social work education was commenced in 1973 at the Institute of Social Work which at the time served as the sole provider of social work training in the country until the year 2000 (Mabeyo, 2014)<sup>[20]</sup>. The National University of Rwanda initiated a Bachelor program in social work in 1998 in the context of dealing with the complex problems fueled by the genocide and its aftermath effects (Kalinganire and Rutikanga, 2014)<sup>[15]</sup>, in addition to several psycho-trauma training projects assisting the victims of the genocide and other vulnerable groups.

### **Method of Study**

The study utilized focus group discussions to collect qualitative data based on a three-day Master of Social Work seminar on the theme: Indigenization of Social Work in the Southwest State of Somalia, held at the University of Southern Somalia in Baidoa in the month of February 2022. MSW students were assigned explore, discuss, and problematize the theme into sub-themes embedded in the challenges faced by the Southwest society. Three students and the course director participated in the data collection. At each presentation and discussion session, questions were posed to the presenter and participants and the responses written. At the end of the seminar the team convened for data organization and reconciliation where necessary. The findings were reviewed and revised to reflect the objective of the study. A descriptive analysis of the challenges of SW and the trajectory of its introduction in the Southwest State of Somalia were closely observed. The study has adopted a narrative approach to present and discuss the results.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

#### **Baidoa and the Southwest Society**

Baidoa, a city which doubles as a district, is the capital of Bay Region, one of three such provinces that joined to form the regional administration known as the Southwest State of Somalia (SWSS). It is the provisional seat of the administration of SWSS due to the unpreparedness of Barawa city, the proposed capital of the State. Baidoa has a long history characterized by foundation of schools of Islamic education, a field which other districts like Baardheere, Diinsoor and the entire Digil-Mirifle populated regions of Bay and Bakool are attributed to have produced scholars of sound religious and community leadership (Abdurahman, Eno, and Kusow 2020)<sup>[2]</sup>. During colonial era, particularly the period toward liberation, the Digil-Mirifle communities were resistant against the formation of a centrally controlled administration and ‘government of unity’, proposing instead a decentralized federal system of regional self-autonomy.

The Digil-Mirifle political elite and leaders of the time were highly skeptical of the quality of ‘unity’ propagated by interest-focused individuals of the Somali Youth League (SYL) party dominated by politicians from the central and eastern regions of the country. Opposing political ideologies within the leadership of the SYL have led to Haji Mohamed Hussein Hamud, one of the founders of the Somali Youth Club which later became Somali Youth League, to be relieved of his post as the party leader (Trunji 2015; Eno 2008)<sup>[34, 8]</sup>. Upon acquiring independence, politicians of the Rahaweyn (Reeweng in the local Maay language) were not impressed by the distribution of cabinet and other top administrative posts in the government, keeping alive the quest for a self-administration. After 9 years of civilian administrations hampered by ethnocracy, corruption and malfeasance, the second president of the state was assassinated by one of his kin while on a tour in his home-town of Garowe

in October 1969. At dawn on October 21, 1969, a bloodless military coup d'état led by Gen. Mohamed Siad Barre, took the leadership of the country (Eno 2008) <sup>[8]</sup>.

The leadership organ of the military junta, the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC), amassed support of the masses, which helped Siad Barre in controlling the country under a very tight dictatorial grip. Political parties were abolished, and opposition to the military government was a crime tantamount to treason punishable by life imprisonment or death sentence. After 21 years of military rule and deeper practices of corruption, nepotism and clanocracy, the United Somali Congress (USC), an armed movement of the Hawiye clan, toppled Barre's military regime in January 1991, after entering the capital Mogadishu and bombarding Villa Somalia, the presidential palace. What ensued was a mayhem and a prolonged unrest and civil anarchy (Eno 2008) <sup>[8]</sup>, lawlessness, successive interim and federal administrations none of which could function beyond the barrier of being a fragile administration.

In any case, it was during this period of armed clan confrontation between the opposing armed militia of the Hawiye and Daarood clans that Baidoa suffered one of the most tragic disasters. It was ransacked by both armed factions. Growing number of deaths, failure to engage in livelihood supporting activities like farming and livestock-breeding, exodus from homes and villages in search of safe haven, and a protracted period of hunger and starvation saw Baidoa dubbed as the City of Death, despite previously priding itself as the breadbasket of the country (Eno, 2008; Lacey, 2006) <sup>[8, 19]</sup>. Consecutive years of cycles of drought, famine, and floods have left the SWSS citizens in dire difficulties, making Baidoa district the host of a massive population of "nearly 360,000 displaced people in 500 locations," (IOM 2021) <sup>[13]</sup>.

### **Challenges in the Southwest State of Somalia**

In its current situation, many challenges plague SWSS such as the growing number of IDPs, poor sanitization, lack/shortage of adequate clean drinking water, shortage of healthcare services (Abdinor *et al.* 2021) <sup>[1]</sup>, increased occurrences of crime in child abuse and gender-based violence (GBV), among others. In fact, the challenges multiply by the day although the obstacles could not hinder community-based organizations (CBOs) from taking initiatives in their effort to fill gaps by offering services the state administration has faced a shortfall in their delivery. For example, health and sanitation awareness campaigns, seminars and workshops enlightening the society on GBV and child abuse are organized periodically to confront and minimize the trials and tribulations women and children are facing. Yet, in spite of all the effort to enhance the victims' situation, the fact still remains that GBV and child abuse in the SWSS could probably be the highest in the country (United Nations, www.somalia.un.org).

For instance, incidents of child murder of the most heinous proportion have taken place in the Southwest (Goobjoog News 2021) <sup>[10]</sup>, where community-based organizations and advocates against GBV and child abuse confront such acts with district-wide protests. Gender abuse, including murder and concealment of the victim's body in septic tanks are among the violence and abuses encountered by women in this part of the country (SONNA, 2022) <sup>[30]</sup>. Worse than many places, GBV is deplorably an everyday occurrence in a society where cultural bias against women is (mis)interpreted in many cases as a religious right, although women activists are putting up a challenge to ameliorate the situation (Massoud 2021) <sup>[21]</sup>.

Although multifarious types of abuses are a reality in Southwest, informed approaches with civilized and just remedy are either lacking or inadequate. One of the reasons related to the inadequacy of remedy is that some of the grievances are resolved according to customary law (xeer) that may provide neither fairness nor appropriate redress to the female or child victim. Circumstances like these, which are prevalent in many parts of the State, leave the victims with excruciating scars of psycho-trauma that keep reverberating and haunting them every moment of their lifetime (United Nations 2020) <sup>[37]</sup>.

### **Community-Based Organizations**

Interventions in GBV and child abuse are usually carried out by local community-based organizations in the form of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), although the court of law is involved in some of the cases. These community-based awareness-building initiatives in the forms of workshops and seminars are severally organized with the University of Southern Somalia Students' Union which has a large base of youth, among them vocal female scholars and supportive male counterparts, who provide significant advocacy for gender equality and child wellbeing. The USS gender advocacy team consists of young women intellectuals who have benefitted from numerous gender training courses in the state, inside the country, and abroad and developed over the years the expertise to facilitate in gender seminars and workshops. By considering the role and participation of CBOs in matters social work, the USS creates opportunities toward the contextualization of solutions to the challenges the Southwest society is grappling with. This unique approach fosters community participation in social work at the grassroots level while at the same time capitalizing on a combination of indigenous knowledge base and professional practice of SW, owing to the limited capacity of the administration of the Southwest State.

### **Capacity Gap of the Southwest State Administration**

The Southwest State is the core of enormous challenges ranging from financial resources to sufficiently trained human capital. The situation becomes more catastrophic especially in the absence of trained and qualified social workers and psycho-trauma counselors capable of intervening needy situation. Skilled workforce does not exist that can assist the victims in overcoming their psychological wounds so as to resume normal life. In fact, social

work education, which could be the appropriate avenue for psycho-social trauma counseling, is at the nascent stage and is expected to graduate its first holders of Bachelor of Social Work Degree late this year in four (4) selected higher institutions of learning in Mogadishu, Puntland and Somaliland. Therefore, the administration of the Southwest State is yet to develop the capacity to intervene except mostly in the legal courts—although cases of GBV and/or child abuse are settled outside the courts of law and in preference of *xeer* (customary law) that leaves the culprit go with impunity.

Thus, while on the one hand the SWSS administration is handicapped by lack of resources to train professional counselors engaged in delivery of needed counseling services, on the other hand, it has not approached the existing higher learning institutions for their expertise in introducing courses and training programs on social work in general and that of psycho-trauma counseling in particular. As a result of this gap, and the State's lack of focus to engage institutions that could intervene with expertise, the Southwest State has neither produced qualified professional trauma counselors nor put in place reliable research that problematizes the issue from various scholarly perspectives that might contribute toward addressing the problem.

### **The USS and Its Academic Leadership Role**

After conducting a situational analysis which incorporated discussions with community-based organizations, a section of the lawyers and legal professionals in the city, individual advocates against gender-based violence (GBV) and child abuse, and intellectuals of the State, the need for adequate and well-trained social work professionals emerged. A concept note to the USS Board of Trustees ensued and their endorsement to establish a social work course came timely. Unlike other institutions which benefited in one way or the other from international organizations like UNICEF (Eno *et al.* 2022), the University of Southern Somalia designed its Social Work Education initiative with no support from any international body. The inaugural class consisted of 20 students enrolled and trained in an intensive program that offered ten courses in a semester of study convened for five days a week, delivering a package equivalent to an ordinary one-year certificate course. In fact, it was not until the successful completion of the first cohort that the new leadership of the Ministry of Women and Human Rights of SWSS that came in 2021 sponsored a group of ten students in 2021 for enrolment into the second cohort who completed a similar robust program.

In the earlier USS Board discussions following the concept presentation, three strategic issues were identified, discussed and approved at Board level. First, the introduction of social work education as a credit bearing course in the USS faculties of Social Sciences and Health Sciences and upgrading the certificate and diploma programs to undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in the following years ([www.uss.edu.so](http://www.uss.edu.so)). Second, collaboration and partnership with credible social work institutions in the region, which the USS later realized with institutions such as the East Africa Regional Resource Center, and the Department of Social Work and Social Administration both at Makerere University, to name but a few, and further extending it to institutions across the continent and the globe.

The third issue of interest related to capacity building with view to enabling the USS to sustain the program in the long term. This involved preparation of lecturers with Masters' degree to lead the course in the subsequent years—in addition to benefiting from online continuous professional development (CPD) programs on SW education offered by academicians of the regional partners and their networks. Three experienced lecturers with closely related undergraduate and postgraduate degrees (coauthors of this study) were identified and their credentials and expertise assessed to fit the study program before enrollment.

Through the process of assessment, higher education experts were consulted regarding the lecturers' request for credit exemption for prior learning equivalent to the Master's level. A variety of factors were separately and individually weighted against their qualifications and experiences relevant to social work and were endorsed by external/international higher education evaluators before having them enroll in the Master of Social Work program. The three MSW candidates are studying on for a dual-degree program jointly offered by the University of Southern Somalia (USS) in partnership with St Clements Private University (SCPU) in Lausanne, Switzerland. The USS partner, SCPU, is an institution accredited to offer Awards for Training and Higher Education (ATHE) degree programs regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (OFQUAL) of the Government of the United Kingdom (St Clements Education Group 2022) <sup>[33]</sup>. Unlike other institutions, the milestone achievements by the USS include its adoption of chartered social work education programs as offered by its partner institutions which are internationally accredited in all levels of awards including certificate, diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate studies. The programs are however modified to fit in cultural and religious knowledge as practiced by the Somali society

University of Southern Somalia's Master of Social Work course exposes students to critical analysis of social work that draws on the global while directing its special focus on the local Somali contexts, particularly the SWSS. The approach problematizes current structural processes of modernization, globalization and social change, as well as indigenous problems such as widespread poverty, social exclusion, poor governance, policy studies, and scenarios of ethnic and political violence and discrimination. In providing the academic leadership role, USS capitalizes on existing opportunities and advantages such as being the first university established in the Southwest State; the leader in higher education in the Southwest State; having a large network of local organizations and academic scholars in different parts of the world, and so far being the only higher education institution in the SWSS accredited by the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE) of Somalia (MECHE 2021; Mataan 2021) <sup>[22]</sup>. In addition to the leverage mentioned, the leadership of the USS is bestowed

with rich expertise in the field of education in its various levels, excelling in trainings offered to community-based organizations (CBOs) and to local primary and secondary school teachers for skills development and capacity building as well as for continuous professional development (CPD).

The USS prides itself in the formulation of the SW education program as well as for being among the leading institutions in the social sciences with at least 4 lecturers with expertise in the delivery of courses on psycho-social trauma counseling—a core component among SW counseling courses. The institution is supported by a broad network of collaborating institutions in the East Africa region, Europe and the USA in the case that further faculty capacity building is required. The USS's Hakaba Institute for Research and Training (HIRT) offers short courses, seminars, workshops as well as research, facilitating for students and partners to participate in the USS's knowledge production program. HIRT has a huge international network of scholars and researchers who are available upon request to offer courses online and in-person.

In 2021, the USS has on its own initiative conducted 2 psycho-trauma counselling training programs: a) The first one was held for three days, while b) The second event was conducted for 4 days. Currently, the USS is working on a strategic plan to develop and adopt a chartered psycho-trauma course to a one-year Professional Diploma award of international recognition. Regarding the implementation of a large-scale psycho-trauma project, the USS has a potential to convene lecturers/counselors from one of its several collaborating institutions such as Makerere University or the University of Nairobi, among others, to conduct capacity building for staff and faculty or teach on any award level of the program. A qualified psycho-trauma-counselor himself, Professor Dr. Mohamed A. Eno, the Executive President of the USS, was trained in late 1990s in Kenya through a program sponsored by the Bantu Rehabilitation Trust--Somalia, and later attended courses offered by the Trocaire psycho-trauma project in Rwanda, coordinated at the time by Mrs. Alphosine Mutabonwa Abia (Keena 1996)<sup>[16]</sup>.

### Conclusion

This study has provided a brief description of the introduction of social work education in the Southwest State of Somalia as a corporate social responsibility initiative by the University of Southern Somalia to address challenges relating to lack of trained professional social workers and educators. While institutions in Mogadishu, Puntland and Somaliland have been assisted through foreign aid to start social work education, the USS has assumed an unmatched role in introducing the program as a self-initiated community effort. The study further reveals how the University of Southern Somalia has spread its wings by collaborating and partnering with higher learning institutions across the region and in the globe—schools whose expertise in the discipline is far ahead and capable to support the program at USS.

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