

**ADDRESS BY THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT ON THE OCCASION OF
NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF SOCIAL WORKERS ASSOCIATION OF
GHANA, (SWAG) HELD IN CLOGSAG AUDITORIUM, MINISTRIES,
ACCRA**

FROM THE 5TH TO 7TH NOVEMBER, 2024

Madam Chairperson, Hon. Vice President of The Republic of Ghana, Dr. Alhaji Mahamudu Bawumia, His Excellency John Dramani Mahama, The Member of Parliament, Honourable Zanetor Agyeman Rawlings, Minister For Gender, Children And Social Protection, Chiefs And Queenmothers, Dr. Evans Aggrey-Darko, Head, Office of the Civil Service, Hon. Ing. Dr. Nana Ato Auther, Head of Service, Office of the Local Government Service, Rev. Dr. Comfort Asare, the immediate outgoing National Director of Department of Social Welfare, the Acting National Director of Department of Social Welfare, the National Director of Community Development, Judges, Lawyer Sheila Minkah-Premo, Head of SWAG Legal Team, Foreign Partners, SWAG Executives, Regional Directors of Social Welfare, Social Work Lecturers, the Police, NGOs, Corporate Associations, Noble Social Workers, Social Work Students, Trained But Unemployed Social Workers, The Media, All Protocols Observed.

With all due respect to the hard working departed souls of the great Social Work Profession especially those in Ghana, may we be on our feet for a minute silence? “May the souls of the departed rest in perfect peace especially the soul of the great freedom fighter, great seasoned social worker who died on the job, the late Margaret Bayitse, we still recognize you, rest well in perfect peace.

Respectfully, Good Morning to you all. You are all welcome to this momentous maiden Social Workers Conference. I feel most privileged to stand before you to speak to you on this particular day of Social Worker’s Conference. It is really a great day.

I would like to once again welcome everyone here with our great Slogan, Social Workers! with Response!!! Human Dignity and Development. Thank God for bringing us this far, I would like to pay great homage to few gallant men and

women whose rich experiences, knowledge and wisdom have brought us this far. Their tireless effort and resilient deserve great commendation and rewards. Without them we would not have seen the light of this day. The first is the almighty God our great creator. The second one goes to all the national executive members of Social Workers Association of Ghana (SWAG), Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Office of the Civil Service, the Local Government Service, SWAG Legal Team, Rev. Dr. Comfort Asare, the late Margaret Bayitse, Lawyer Sheila Minkah-Premo and SWAG Chief Technical Advisor (Mad. Susan T. Akortia), Chairman of National Planning Committee of this Conference (Dr. innocent damadu Onyx), Dr. Abrefa of Methodist University, Dr. Bullard Forkuo of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, and all the other team members, the founding fathers and mothers. All those who in diverse ways played a key role towards this conference, I say Ayekoo to you. May God Richly Bless You.

Madam Chairperson, the journey and birth of Social Workers Association of Ghana (SWAG), started early April, 2017 led by Mr. Exorgbe Arnold Kodjo Divine and the idea was how do we get all Social Workers together to see to the promotion and protection of the profession so that Social Workers receive the recognition they deserve as a Professional Body in order to work in the interest of the Marginalized, Socially Excluded, and other categories of vulnerable in society. This was just an idea that gave birth to the creation of GH MMDA Platform to discuss Social Work issues and to see how best Social Work practice in Ghana could be done.

This was so challenging but we kept on till we are all witnessing our third gathering since its birth in 2017 today. Our membership number stands more than Five Hundred in Ghana and we are still counting. Members of this great Association deserve wonderful commendation and thanks. They have shown that with our numbers combine together we could surmount every obstacle. We thank all Noble Social Workers/ Social Development Officers/Social Workforce Service providers and all those who in diverse ways promoted this Association.

Gathering here today, Madam Chairperson is to engage all necessary stakeholders, like the Media, Ministries, and Partners to strategies plans and programmes for Social Workers. It is also a day to present a position paper on the passage of Professional Social Work Bill, the passage of Aged Bill, Strengthening

Structures of Decentralized Social Development Class at the Metropolitan Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs), the Disability Act, 715 of 2006, Disability Guidelines, the need for L.I to enforce Disability Act, 715 of 2006, and a call for representation of SWAG members on the Inter-Ministerial Committees including that of Social Workers Bill. Highlight issues of vulnerability and how to address them. Finally to interact among ourselves and educate ourselves on how to effectively deliver our services to the individuals, Families and the Communities in need of our services.

Madam Chairperson, I would like to use this conference to point out some Structural Deficiencies and other impediments in the implementation of our general functions as workers within the MMDAs in Ghana and other institutions.

1.0 Structural Deficiencies in Juvenile Justice and Housing for the Needy in Ghana.

Institutions such as Remand Homes, Correctional Centers, Destitute Homes, Shelters for Abused Victims and others that are meant to Accommodate or House some sections of our vulnerable population in times of need have been so dilapidated and in most cases not in existence. As a nation, we cannot boast of at least one standard shelter facility for each of the sixteen (16) regions left alone a District in Ghana as a government institution. It is very sad, Madam Chairperson how could we develop if our vulnerable population is left behind in terms of their needs? We recommend that MMDAs should be instructed to put up at least one Shelter.

2.0 The need for Social Protection Fund to Address Other Vulnerability Issues in Ghana.

The government of Ghana and Donor Partners have been trying their best to alleviate the plight of the vulnerable but as practioners we know there is a huge gap of financial support to address various challenges that confront the vulnerable in Ghana. We are aware of the 3% District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) for Persons with Disability. We also know of the Ghana Aids Commission Support to the HIV and AIDS Patients. The Integrated Social Services (ISS) from UNICEF for activity based funding support for some of the MMDAs and the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) Programme which cuts across all the districts in the country. Even that, is not sufficient. These are mandatory supports

from the government to the MMDAs to address the challenges of these groups. Madam Chairperson, and Invited Guests, we are very much aware that vulnerability is not limited to these groups only. There are huge gaps of support. We can take a look at foreign children on our streets begging for alms. There is also no mandatory support for the Aged Vulnerable Group. Another critical area of interest is support for the Trafficked Children and Support for the Domestic Violence Victims. Clearly, there is clear cut of social exclusion and we call on the government to address the concerns of these vulnerable groups.

We are aware of the challenges that confront the assemblies, it is interesting to note that our reliance on the assemblies have often time not yielding the best outcome of addressing the concerns of the vulnerable that have been excluded from the Mandatory Financial Support. As an association, we are of the view that there is a need for proper funding that could address financial gaps and vehicle for the officers which is crucial in resolving the needs of all vulnerable in Ghana. We therefore call on the government to set aside what we term as **Social Protection Fund** that could address some of these financial gaps in relation to the support for other vulnerable groups. As a matter of agency, vehicle should be bought for Social Development Class Activities.

Once again, Madam Chairperson, Honourable Guests, Media, Noble Social Workers, Ladies and Gentlemen, am very grateful for your attention.

Thank You All And God Bless Us All.

Social Workers!!!! Human Dignity And Development.

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EXORGBE ARNOLD KODJO DIVINE
SWAG NATIONAL PRESIDENT.
6TH NOVEMBER, 2024

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REV. STEPHEN ATTAH - GYAMFI
(SWAG NAT. COORDINATOR.)
6TH NOVEMBER, 2024

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MAD. SUSSAN T. AKORTIA
(CHIEF TECHNICAL ADVISOR)
6TH NOVEMBER, 2024