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EDITORIAL

STRENGTHENING INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY FOR ENDURING WELLBEING: BUILDING INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

The theme for World Social Work Day 2025, "Strengthening intergenerational solidarity for enduring wellbeing", invites social work students, practitioners and scholars alike to reflect on the pivotal role of fostering care and cooperation across generations. It underscores the value of respect, reciprocity and the sharing of wisdom between age groups as fundamental to achieving sustainable societies. The notion of intergenerational solidarity calls for renewed commitment to ensuring that the wellbeing of all is not only secured in the present, but is safeguarded for future generations. It is a call to social workers to recognise the intricate connections between personal, familial and community support systems that transcend age and life stages.

In the South African and broader African contexts, the principles of intergenerational solidarity resonate deeply with indigenous philosophies such as Ubuntu, which emphasises the interconnectedness of individuals within their communities. Across the continent, older generations have long played a central role in passing down knowledge, cultural practices and values, while younger generations contribute fresh perspectives and innovation. This dynamic exchange is vital in addressing contemporary challenges, including poverty, inequality and environmental degradation. Traditional forms of caregiving and mutual support remain essential for social cohesion, particularly in societies where formal social protection systems are under strain.

Globally, the theme aligns with growing concerns about demographic shifts, ageing populations and the pressures on care systems. Social workers are increasingly required to advocate for policies that promote intergenerational equity and ensure that older and younger populations are not placed in opposition to one another. Instead, the focus must be on fostering

collective responsibility, where caregiving is not relegated to specific gender roles but is embraced as a shared societal duty. Intergenerational solidarity also demands attention to the ecological crisis; it challenges current generations to preserve our environment and secure sustainable livelihoods for those to come.

The 2025 theme builds upon previous World Social Work Day themes, including Ubuntu and Buen Vivir, by reinforcing the profession's commitment to global solidarity and the recognition of our shared humanity. It highlights that enduring wellbeing is only possible when generational divides are bridged through compassion, respect and active engagement. For social work practitioners, this means not only supporting families and communities, but also ensuring that voices across the age range are heard and valued in shaping social policies. Through such efforts, the social work profession can continue to uphold human rights, social justice and the dignity of all peoples, ensuring that the bonds between generations remain a source of strength and resilience.

The inaugural issue of *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk* in 2025, commemorating the journal's 60th anniversary, examines the critical role of promoting care and collaboration across generations, involving social work students, practitioners and academics in this shared endeavour. This issue engages with the theme of World Social Work Day 2025 through articles that focus on social workers' wellbeing, as well as their experiences, roles, knowledge and perspectives in strengthening intergenerational solidarity within communities.

The first article, by Precious Mseba and Annaline Keet, focuses specifically on the achievement of wellbeing among South African social workers. Employing the capabilities approach as a theoretical lens, this qualitative research examines the various conversion factors that either constrain or facilitate the attainment of wellbeing among social workers. The findings indicate that professional wellbeing is multifaceted, with social workers defining it in terms of effective practice and professional growth. Several structural, organisational and personal factors can adversely impact on their ability to achieve and sustain these professional functions. These include persistent poverty and inequality, severe resource constraints, and a lack of supportive supervision and experience, among other challenges.

The second article in this issue also focuses on social workers; however, its primary concern is their experiences with the transtheoretical model of change in the involuntary treatment of substance use disorders. Jonathan Cupido and Marichen van der Westhuizen argue that substance use disorders (SUDs) alter brain function, leading to withdrawal symptoms and cravings that contribute to individuals with an SUD being unmotivated to seek treatment. This research employed a qualitative approach, combining exploratory and descriptive research designs. The findings highlight participants' perceptions and experiences of various aspects within the different stages of the transtheoretical model of change, which may assist social workers in guiding involuntary clients towards developing the motivation to seek change.

The next article, which examines a specific role of social workers, is authored by Zintle Ntshongwana and Pius Tanga. The authors observe that family violence is one of the most pressing social issues in South Africa. Their research aims to provide insight into the role of social workers in mobilising community involvement as a strategy for preventing family

violence. Findings from this qualitative research identify various factors contributing to family violence. The authors conclude that social workers play a crucial role in its prevention. However, they recommend that social workers establish violence-prevention programmes that engage men and boys in addressing gender inequality and preventing male-perpetrated violence.

The next article, by Anri Gretha Adlem, qualitatively explores the knowledge and perceptions of school social workers regarding adolescent sexting in Gauteng, as well as their responses to this issue. The research's recommendations include targeted training programmes, collaboration with experts, the integration of strategies into school policies, educational seminars for parents, and continuous professional development for social workers. This research provides nuanced insights to support evidence-based interventions and safeguard adolescent wellbeing in the digital age.

In the fifth article of this issue, Andrew Spaumer, Robert Lekganyane and Linda Shirindi examine traditional male circumcision (TMC), a longstanding African cultural practice that socialises boys and young men into manhood. The authors argue that social workers must possess knowledge of various cultural practices to develop a holistic understanding of the person-in-environment. Such awareness enables them to fulfil their professional mission of promoting basic needs satisfaction, wellbeing and justice for all communities and individuals worldwide, given the fundamental role of culture in people's lives. This research employs an integrative literature review method to describe the legislative and constitutional imperatives regulating TMC in South Africa, outline the TMC process, determine the role of social workers in this practice, and analyse the TMC process from an ecological systems theoretical perspective.

In an article examining the contribution of community volunteers to foster care placements of children living with HIV, Jeffries Zwelithini Khosa and Priscilla Gutura ground their research in Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of human needs. The authors report findings from a qualitative research project based on semi-structured interviews with community volunteers, including eight social auxiliary workers and twelve community caregivers. The findings reveal that community volunteers provide a range of services, including food and nutrition support, home visits, psychosocial assistance, homework support, HIV support groups, HIV adherence programmes and linkage to care for children living with HIV. However, the authors conclude that these programmes have struggled to attract children in foster care, despite their evident need for such services. Consequently, they recommend enhanced collaboration between foster care social workers and community volunteers to ensure that children in foster care living with HIV can fully benefit from the support available.

The penultimate article in this issue, by Winnie Nkosi, Maud Mthembu, Livhuwani Ramphabana and Andiswa Mlothswa, employs a focus group discussion and a descriptive research design to explore the challenges that caregivers face when transitioning to kinship foster care in low-income families in the Amajuba District Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. Grounded in family resilience theory, the authors identify three key themes: resilience in dual caregiving, navigating complex child residency disputes and investigating the personal meanings they associate with fostering children. They argue that

social workers should recognise the strengths and resourcefulness of kinship foster parents, leveraging these qualities to enhance early interventions that support the transition into kinship foster care.

In the final article of this issue, Tatenda Godobi and Thuli Godfrey Mthembu observe that, despite the growing number of immigrant families in South Africa, little has been done to address a significant gap in research on the legacy beliefs of Zimbabwean immigrants as part of efforts to promote social cohesion, integration and successful resettlement. The legacy beliefs framework and the migration system model serve as the theoretical foundations for exploring and describing the acculturation process and its outcomes, including assimilation, rejection, biculturalism and marginalisation. The research identifies three key themes and their interrelated sub-themes: understanding legacy beliefs, legacies of generativity in families, and the complexities influencing the preservation of family legacy beliefs. A key implication for practice highlighted in this research is the need for the local social protection system to consider the legacy beliefs of immigrants in order to enhance their social integration and foster social relationships in a harmonious environment that encourages interdependence and resilient communities.

The articles in this inaugural issue of 2025 all conclude by urging social workers to recognise the complex interrelationships between individual, family, and community support systems, which extend beyond age and life stages, as envisioned in the theme of World Social Work Day 2025.

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