



JUSTIN SILAS

Social Worker and former Para Social Worker, Tanzania



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Overview

For the past eight years, Justin has served the children of his community at Ikolo Ward Kyela District in Tanzania. Because of his passion for working with children and eagerness to help, he was selected by his community to be trained by the Institute of Social Work (ISW)/American International Health Alliance Twinning Center as a Para Social Worker (PSW), then pursued further education to become a professional social worker.

Training and skills

Through the ISW/AIHA Twinning Center PSW trainings, Justin learned how to identify and connect vulnerable children and their families to education, health, legal and psycho social support services. He was also taught how to facilitate family club discussions where families join together to discuss a variety of topics including how to communicate better with their children and discipline them in non-violent ways.

“The training inspired my instinct if not my soul, hence I became touched to save the community,” Justin said. One year after the PSW training, he decided to continue his social work education and entered a diploma program in social sciences, completing it in 2010.

As a result of his prior experience as a PSW and helping the community, in particular its most vulnerable children, he received a scholarship through ISW and the Twinning Center to enroll in a bachelor degree program in social work. He graduated in July 2013 and with this additional level of training, Justin aims to be an even more competent worker and a better advocate for vulnerable populations.

Typical tasks and responsibilities

As a PSW, Justin worked alongside village leaders to identify and register orphans and vulnerable children. Through community sensitization meetings, more and more community members learned about the services PSWs provide and referred vulnerable families for care.

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While a social work student, Justin took advantage of opportunities to develop his leadership skills and tried to make an impact on the field through the national association of social workers in Tanzania, TASWO. He served as a general secretary of his university's social work club, where his biggest accomplishment was influencing TASWO to register students as affiliated members and to improve social work recruitment. TASWO continues to advocate for better recruitment practices with the Tanzanian Department of Social Welfare.

Why he loves his job

"What I love the most about being a social worker is identifying and following up on children in difficult circumstances to make sure they are assisted so they can have a better future," said Justin. Recently, Justin learned that he has been accepted to continue his studies in a master's program in social welfare and

health policy in Norway. He is hopeful that the impact of social work on his community, and on his country, will be that he and his colleagues will be equipped to overcome the unknown and build a better future for the coming generations.

The Global Social Service Workforce Alliance would like to thank the Tanzania Institute of Social Work (ISW), American International Health Alliance's HIV/AIDS Twinning Center, Jane Addams College of Social Work (JACSW), and the Midwest AIDS Training and Education Center at the University of Illinois Chicago for contributing this profile to the "I am a Social Service Worker" series.

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Who is the social service workforce?

While capturing any one definition of the social service workforce is challenging, it can be broadly defined to describe a variety of workers – paid and unpaid, governmental and nongovernmental – who staff the social service system and contribute to the care of vulnerable populations. The social service system is comprised of a set of interventions, programs and benefits that are provided by governmental, civil society and community actors to ensure the welfare and protection of socially or economically disadvantaged individuals and families.

What is Social Service Workforce Week?

During this week, advocates will bring attention to and build support for the social service workforce as well as raise awareness about promising workforce strengthening efforts supported by stakeholders around the world. Organized around daily themes focused on areas of practice, the week will allow Alliance members and the public to engage in a dynamic platform of information exchange and advocacy through various forms of social media.

What is the Institute of Social Work (ISW)/ American International Health Alliance Twinning Center?

The HIV/AIDS Twinning Center is a program of the American International Health Alliance that creates peer-to-peer

relationships between organizations working to improve services for people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS. With support from the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, these twinning partnerships establish an effective framework for building sustainable institutional and human-resource capacity through the open exchange of knowledge, information, and professional experience.

Since 2006, the Tanzania Institute of Social Work (ISW) has been partnering with Jane Addams College of Social Work (JACSW) and the Midwest AIDS Training and Education Center at the University of Illinois Chicago to strengthen the social work profession in Tanzania. Key elements of the Para Social Worker training and technical assistance program have focused on strengthening the role of social workers as case managers and increasing the capacity of community volunteers to access resources for improving care for vulnerable children. In collaboration with the Tanzania Human Resource Capacity Project, over 4800 individuals have participated in the PSW training and 2500 have completed it as of early 2014.

Learn More

Learn more about Justin and other social service workers! Join the conversation on Twitter using the hashtag #SSWWeek and online at www.socialserviceworkforce.org/SSWWeek.

"Improving the workforce. Improving lives."