

Career in social work

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Are you someone who enjoys or is passionate about working with people? Or do you know someone who enjoys working with people or helping vulnerable people? If the answer is yes, then maybe you or that individual you know should consider a career in Social work. In the US there were over 680,000 social workers in 2016, and according to the US Bureau of Labour Statistics, they estimate that the number will grow by 16% by 2026. The same trend can be noticed in Europe. According to the Social Services Europe, jobs in the human and social work sector represent between 10-19% of the total employment in countries like Denmark, Finland, Belgium, France, and Germany.

What is Social Work?

The dictionary definition of social work is '*work carried out by trained personnel to alleviate the conditions of those people in a community suffering from social deprivation.*' Wikipedia defines it as a '*profession concerned with helping individuals, families, groups, and communities to enhance their individual and collective well-being. It aims to help people develop their skills and their ability to use their resources and those of the community to resolve problems.*'

Social work is concerned with assisting individuals in overcoming obstacles in their lives. Poverty, addiction, unemployment, handicap, abuse, mental disease, and a variety of other issues are among them. The importance of social justice and equality is also emphasized in social work.

According to the International Federation of Social Workers, social workers work in communities with people finding positive ways forward in the challenges they face in their lives. They help people build the kind of environments in which they want to live, through co-determination, co-production, and social responsibility. Social work is different from other professions, it focuses both on the person and their environment. Social workers deal with the external factors that impact a person's situation and perspective. Social workers create opportunities for assessment and intervention, to help clients and communities cope effectively with their reality and change, that reality when necessary.

Social workers are committed to advocacy, social justice, and helping individuals, families, and communities in need. Some of the services offered by social workers are as follows:

- Can be found in hospitals, helping people cope with acute conditions and chronic illness.

- Provide therapy and community health centers
- Help prevent students from dropping out of school
- Help prisoners as they reenter communities
- Provide rehabilitative support in drug and alcohol centers.
- Provide outreach and long-term care in nursing homes and homeless shelters.
- Social workers are clinical therapists to members of the military and veterans.
- First responders during natural disasters.

How to build a career in social works? Qualifications required?

The social work profession is a dynamic career choice for those looking to promote healthy growth and change among disadvantaged groups. Social workers are individuals who believe in human connection to empower others. Whether you are interested in working with youth and family, veterans, elders, LGBTQ communities, individuals experiencing homelessness, individuals with mental health needs, or refugees, in a multitude of settings, the following needs to be considered:

1. Complete a Bachelor's Degree

Earning a bachelor's degree is the first step to becoming a social worker. When studying for a bachelor's degree, prospective social workers should take courses in social services, case management, and social work practice. One does not need to major in social work to pursue opportunities in the field. Internships and volunteer opportunities help prepare future social workers.

The following universities in Zimbabwe offer degrees in Social Work:

- University of Zimbabwe
- Midlands State University
- Bindura University of Science Education
- Zimbabwe Open University

2. Choose a work specialty

Social workers often specialize their training by focusing in an area like healthcare, school social work, mental health, or children and families. Selecting one helps one to build specialized knowledge and

stand out on the job market. The speciality may include additional coursework or an internship.

3. Complete internship

Social workers complete an internship as part of the social worker education requirements. At the undergraduate level, the internship or practicum may include placements in social service organizations, schools, or government agencies. Social work students at the master's level complete a more extensive internship within their area of specialty. During an internship, social work students gain hands-on training in the field. They learn from experienced social workers while meeting the requirements for a social work license.

4. Earn a Master's in Social Work

After completing a bachelor's degree it is further recommended for one to obtain a Masters's degree in Social Work. Through the master's degree, one can gain advanced training in social work and will allow one to get a license to practice as a social worker. Some universities offer either an online master's in social work or an on-campus option, it's a matter of seeing what is best suited for you.

5. Earn professional certification

In Zimbabwe for one to practice as a social worker, they need to be registered with the Council of Social Workers Zimbabwe. While, the requirements for a social work license, vary depending on the country, they generally include an accredited social work degree, passing accreditation social work examinations, and completing supervised practice hours.

6. Finding employment

After meeting the requirements for becoming a social worker, you can proceed to apply for social work jobs. There are a variety of settings where one can choose to work as a social worker i.e. government agencies, social services organizations, hospitals, and schools. Before applying for a job, you should research the requirements needed for you to land the job you want i.e. the education required, certification, work experience, etc. Whilst studying for your degree, you can look for opportunities that can give you the necessary exposure to the field you want to go in. Building a professional network while in school can help social workers transition into the workforce.

Top people in the field

The following are names of top people in the field of Social Work derived from [an article by Social Work Degree Guide](#) :

1. Preston Dyer

Preston Dyer is one of the most familiar faces in the social work arena of academia. Dr. Dyer joined Baylor University in 1969 and served thirty years as the director of the undergraduate program. Prior to his many roles at Baylor, he worked as a clinical social worker in the area of mental health. His research has focused on strong marriages and families, with publications in over 100 academic and scholarly journals. Dyer is a member of the Academy of Certified Social Workers and sits on the board of PREPARE/ENRICH – a premarital counseling inventory and program organization. Dr. Dyer and his wife are the former presidents of the Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment.

2. Dr Marcie Pitt-Castoupes

A professor, director, leader, and investigator, Dr. Marcie Pitt-Castoupes wears many hats for the field of social work. She is a professor at the Boston College Graduate School of Social Work with additional appointments at Middlesex University in London and the Carroll School of Boston College. Pitt-Castoupes' primary focus is social justice within the workplace and she has devoted much of her career examining factors that contribute to adverse employment among vulnerable populations. Her work is extensively published in scholarly and practitioner journals. In 2006 and 2010, Pitt-Castoupes was invited by the White House to participate in a forum and committee focusing on workplace flexibility.

3. Karen S. Haynes

Karen Haynes is the president of California State University, San Marcos. A former dean and professor of social work, Haynes has authored and co-authored numerous books, articles, and publications on political social work. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Texas and currently serves as the Presidential Sponsor for the American Council on Education's Southern California Network of Women in Higher Education. She has been awarded numerous honors, including the Most Admired CEO award and Women Who Move the City. Haynes is an advocate of community engagement and believes in making a transformational regional impact.

Some famous television personalities have degrees in Social work the likes of Samuel L Jackson (Samuel L. Jackson attended Atlanta's Morehouse College and majored in social work. He joined the

Civil Rights Movement to advocate for Black Power and equal rights. Suze Orman-Financial guru Suze Orman got her to start at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with a Bachelor of Arts in Social Work in 1976. After pursuing her failed dream of opening a restaurant, she underwent training with Merrill Lynch and eventually became Vice President of Investments for Prudential. Suze Orman is best known for her CNBC show and best-selling books like *The Road to Wealth*.

Top organizations in the field

Most social workers work for non-governmental organizations. The following are the leading organizations where social workers are found:

1. United Nations

Established in 1945, the United Nations is one of the foremost social work organisations striving to maintain international peace and human rights across 193 member countries. The UN's global workforce consists of over 41,000 altruistic staff at field offices from Baghdad and Nairobi to Port-au-Prince. Worldwide job opportunities are listed for social workers on political, humanitarian, emergency relief, or peacekeeping missions.

2. International Rescue Committee

The International Rescue Committee provides lifesaving assistance to refugees forced to flee from war, natural disasters, or other humanitarian crises. IRC hires candidates with a bachelor's degree in social work or similar fields and at least two years of human service experience.

3. Save The Children

Save the Children is an international NGO working in 120 nations to protect the welfare of over 55 million youth annually. Founded in 1919 by Eglantyne Jebb, Save the Children is located in London, England, with job opportunities worldwide. Social workers could work full-time as child protection managers, migration advisers, nutrition advocates, and more. For one to apply for a job at Save the Children they need to have a bachelor's degree in social work or human services with a minimum of five years of experience.

4. World Health Organisation

The World Health Organization is a specialized UN agency aiming to help global citizens attain the highest possible level of health. The WHO's diverse workforce includes over 8,500 professionals working in 147 countries. Most vacancies at WHO are in the following areas: clinical social work, mental health, disability rehabilitation, and emergency relief.

5. Oxfam

Oxfam International Secretariat is a global confederation of 18 NGOs working across 94 countries to end injustices that cause poverty. Supporting people impacted by conflict to grow food and earn a living has been their duty since 1995. Oxfam members can find job opportunities in Jordan, Hong Kong, Belgium, Ethiopia, and more. Social worker positions will require holding a bachelor's degree with one to two years of experience and fluency in host languages like Arabic.

6. HelpAge International

HelpAge International is an NGO with 200+ partners serving older adults in over 70 global nations. Since 1983, HelpAge has coordinated community projects to address issues affecting the elderly, including discrimination, health, poverty, HIV/AIDS, and natural disaster. Job vacancies are posted frequently for professionals with at least five years of humanitarian experience. Bachelor's degrees in social work, nutrition, public health, and nursing are preferred.

7. Food for the Hungry International

Food for the Hungry International is a Christian relief organization based in Phoenix, Arizona, to combat hunger in over 25 countries. FH provides Christ-centered missions that empower vulnerable communities to overcome poverty. Social workers can find employment and church mission opportunities in the world's most devastated countries. To find a job one is required to have a master's degree in sociology, social work, or international relations and a minimum of 3 years experience in a similar field.

8. Women for Women International

Women for Women International is an NGO founded by Zainab Salbi to support female survivors after the war's devastation. WfWI is headquartered in New York City with eight field offices from Nigeria and Afghanistan to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since 1993, WfWI has provided social work services to

empower the Middle East's marginalized women. Women for Women International employs advocacy coordinators and change agents who hold a bachelor's degree in social sciences.

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