

International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW)
International Project Grant
Final Report
May 2019

Collaboration for International field practicum for Social Work education in support of elderly care in Nigeria

Executive Summary

The department of Social Work and Human Services through the Head of Department, Augusta Y Olaore PhD, L.M.S.W submitted a proposal titled, "Collaboration for International field practicum for Social Work education in support of elderly care in Nigeria" in May 2016 to IASSW. The \$4000 grant was awarded in August of 2017 with a first disbursement of \$1500 received on September 22, 2017. The grant enabled two Social Work Students and a faculty from Babcock University Nigeria, to travel to Savannah State University, Georgia USA to participate in a field practicum in agencies that provide care for the elderly. The International exchange program was from January to May 2018. The students conducted their final year research project in issues that pertain to the care of the elderly in Nigeria. The international field placement enabled both faculty and student to gain exposure in best practices in care of the elderly and were motivated to enhance social services to senior citizens in Nigeria.

1. Co-ordinating and Delivery Group

Dr Augusta Y Olaore (Babcock University, Chair Department of SWHS); Dr Roenia Deloach (Savannah State University, USA); Dr Uzo Anucha (York University, Canada); Dr Juliet Drolet (Canada)

A very special thanks to IASSW for the grant approval and what has been disbursed so far. All monies were utilized to directly facilitate the project as proposed. Appreciation also goes to Babcock University for the additional support that enabled a second faculty to mentor the field supervisor.

2. Rationale and purpose of the project

HIV/AIDS and poor quality of life of an increasing ageing population are two national social problems in Nigeria (WHO 2003, UNAID 2015). The traditional structures of family members caring for the aged is being eroded due to urbanization, competitive job markets, mobility etc (Okoye 2012). The aforementioned problem is further aggravated by the lack of skilled social work professionals with exposure to social aspects of HIV/AIDS in geriatric care.

Social Work is a young and developing profession in Nigeria. The Nigerian Social Workers are still seeking governmental recognition and affirmation as a profession. This reality has impacted the awareness and appreciation of the Social Work Profession in the country. Furthermore, the training and professional preparation of Social Workers through Higher Educational programs also struggles for recognition in amongst other helping profession. Most Social Work Programs have been housed in other academic units such as Sociology, Nursing, Public Health etc. in Nigerian Universities with curricular that are mere adaptations of that of the host departments. It is only until recent times that the

National Universities Commission developed a minimum bench mark for the accreditation of Social Work programs. In spite of these realities Institutions such as Babcock University and the University of Benin, strive for academic excellence for the existing Social Work programs through collaborations with other schools outside the country. The goal is to broaden the horizon of students through exposure to best practices both in Africa and global North. With field practicum being the pedagogy of Social Work Education, Babcock University provides field placements for social Work Students that will provide hands on practical experiences across the various areas of specialization. While there are quite a number of agencies for medical, industrial, school, and forensic social work, there are limited agencies for geriatrics Social Work practice. Babcock University in response to the stated social problem of poor quality of life for the Nigerian aged population sort for the IASSW grant for assistance in funding geriatrics related International field placements for Social Work Students. The need to provide field practicum opportunities to social work students to observe and understudy best practices in other parts of the world is became paramount.

Prior to now Babcock University Students and their families have been responsible for 100% of the cost of international student exchanges since 2014 which included field placements in agencies which has included but not limited to, geriatric care in the United States based on an existing MOU with the Savannah State University in Savannah Georgia and a Hospice Agency in South Africa. However the recent recession in the country and the astronomically increased USD value to the Nigerian Naira jeopardized the financial ability of students and their families to self-sponsor the exchange program while they maintain enrolment at the University. The IASSW grant provided a subsidy that ensured the continuity of the exchange program.

3. Description of the process of implementation

Upon the award of the grant, the participating Universities was informed. Six Students who had elected to go for the pre-existing international exchange program at the Savanah State University were asked to select their placements of interested without being told about the grant. Two students indicated their interest in geriatric field placement. One of the students unfortunately was not granted an American Visa and was replaced by another student who had been granted a visa. The students then officially applied to the department for the grant stating the reasons for their interest in gerontology Social Work. The department then approved their application. The names of the student were submitted to the Savannah State University Field Faculty for possible matches with gerontology social work placement. The students travelled to the United States in January 2018 to resume at the Savannah State University for the spring semester. The students were also enrolled in a class on Social Work Practice with the Aged, taught by Savannah State University.

By February 2018, the students were matched with 2 agencies. The Economic Opportunity Authority (EOA) and Community Care Home.

3.1 Overview of the Placement Supervision

1. Economic Opportunity Authority (EOA)

EOA is situated at 618 West Anderson Street, Savannah, GA 31415. EOA was created in 1964 and had 54 years of service in the state of Georgia, educating, advocating and providing outstanding programs for the elderly in Savannah.

EOA provides financial and social services to the older adults, financial in terms of stipend for meals and subsidies for gas and home bills and social services in terms of interaction with children for self-fulfilment. They also plan and sponsor conference attendance for them to enhance their intellect and wellbeing.

2. Community Care Home

Community Care Home is a private non-profit agency and is situated in 5208 Abercon Street, Savannah GA. It is a live-in-home for the elderly from 60years and above. The care home provides Health services and social services but mostly health care services because individual in the care home already have money and retirement benefits so they pay for care and health services for baths, meals and other assistance rendered in the care home.

3.2 Participants

The two student participants were Sharon James-Ogunji and Tomiwa Arogundade. Dr Rita Ezeokoli from Babcock University and Dr Felicia Toogle from Savannah State University provided field supervision. Dr Julie Drolet from University of Calgary and Dr Uzo Anucha from York University, were consultants on the project. Dr Augusta Olaore, the chair from Babcock University collaborated with Dr Roenia Deloach the MSW Coordinator at Savannah State University were the liaisons for the Participating Universities.

3.3 Project Outcome

Both Tomiwa and Sharon were able to advocate for the use of an electronic device to monitor falling for senior citizens at the Economic Opportunity Authority.

As a result of the international field placement funded by the IASSW grant, the students conducted research projects in the area of Elderly care. The projects reflected how their exposure to services to Senior citizens in the United States of America can be beneficial to elderly care in Nigeria.

Sharon's topic was A Comparative Assessment of Geriatric Support Services in Oyo State, Nigeria and Savannah, Georgia USA. The goal of the study was to comparatively assess the geriatric support services available in Nigeria and USA using Oyo State and Savannah Georgia as case study. The study objectives were to:

1. Comparatively assess the financial support services available for the elderly in Oyo State, Nigeria and Savannah Georgia, USA.
2. Compare the extent of social support services provided for the elderly in Oyo State, Nigeria and Savannah Georgia, USA.
3. Compare the level of exposure of the elderly to information access so as to enhance their intellectual capacity in Oyo State, Nigeria and Savannah Georgia, USA.
4. Comparatively assess the availability transport services for the elderly in Oyo State, Nigeria and Savannah Georgia, USA.

Her study showed significant disparity between the governmental financial support, social support, access to information and availability of transport services to Senior citizens in Oyo State Nigeria and Savannah, Georgia. She concluded that Nigeria as a nation grapples with

the dilemma of eroding family support for the elderly and the inadequacy of out of home services. She therefore recommended the following:

1. Policy makers should expedite action on the policy implementation to cater for the care of elderly people in the country.
2. It may be necessary for government of the country to consider establishing neighbourhood adult day care centres where elderly persons can meet each other during the day which is managed by trained and qualified social workers and other health care professionals.
3. There should be suitable transportation services for the elderly to facilitate access to shops, attend church services, keep appointments with doctors and dentists, visit friends, and maintain contact with the family. This is important for those who can no longer drive or use public transportation.
4. There should be framework for supportive and protective care that comprises those services provided to frail, ill, or disabled older people to support them and their caretakers maintaining their capacity to live in the community.
5. There is need for social workers to update their knowledge about quality care for the older adults as they work with the elders, their families, and the caseworkers for the frail and disabled elderly in the community. They should provide services to institutionalized aged persons.
6. There should be specialized certification programme for care-givers and social worker in old people's homes, hospitals and other government agencies with specific focus on health and social care for the elderly in the country and West-Africa Sub region.
7. The Federal Government of Nigeria should expedient actions towards the passage of social work bill for social workers in the country to improve quality of care of the elderly. This will enable a well-structured monitoring evaluation exercise to address some sharp practices among NGOs, social workers and care-givers in the country.

Tomiwa's topic was the "Impact of Post-Retirement Anxiety on the Psychosocial Wellbeing of Pensioners in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria". The study examined how post retirement anxiety impacted the psychological wellbeing of retired senior citizens in the section of a city in Nigeria. Tomiwa utilized the backdrop of his International field placement in the United States as a reference point for his study.

The results from his study showed that lateness in paying of pensions and gratuity, the inability of pensioners to meet up with their financial needs, feeling of loneliness and loss of prestige as a result of retirement significantly impacted the psychosocial well-being of pensioners in Ibadan North Local government. This factors were anxiety producing in the pensioners.

He concluded by recommending that pensioners should be educated about the realities of post retirement life before they retire. While the government is to be enjoined through advocacy to be prompt in disbursing retirement benefits, retirees should also be exposed to investment opportunities that may boost their post retirement financial capacities.

4. Direct Outcome of Project and Next Steps

As a result of the international field education, both the student participants and the supervising faculty were exposed to the disparity between the services available to the elderly in the United States compared to Nigeria. They were motivated to conduct researches in those areas of deficit such as social support, transportation and alleviation of post retirement anxiety. Both students obtained A and B scores on their projects. The faculty has indicated an interest

to engage in further exploratory research and has applied for a Fulbright Scholarship to that effect. There is also a proposal to set up a model senior citizen's assisted living facility that can be replicated in different parts of the country.

5. Conclusion

The IASSW International Field Education grant funded an experience for both student and faculty that became an eye opener to the possibilities that are available to improve the quality of care for Senior Citizens in Nigeria. The two students and faculty who were funded by the grant were able to travel to the United States of America and participated in a gerontology field placement as part of their exchange program. Both Students completed their final year research project as a follow up to the field placement.

Sincere gratitude goes to the IASSW team for approving the proposal and granting the funds.

Appendix 1

Pictures



EOA Executive Director and Babcock University Faculty



EOA RSVP Supervisors, Babcock Faculty and interns



EOA RSVP Supervisors, interns, Babcock Faculty and Executive Director



EOA Staff, Babcock Faculty and Gerontology interns



James-Ogunji, Sharon and Arogundade, Tomiwa presenting their proposed electronic device to monitor elderly falling to EOA



James-Ogunji, Sharon presenting the electronic device

Community Care Home



Dr Ezeokoli; James-Ogunji, Sharon and Director of Community Care Home



Dr Ezeokoli; James-Ogunji, Sharon and Director of Community Care Home