Role of Ubuntu in Social Work

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Scholarly angle

Mbiti's African view of man

"**What happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: 'I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am**',

(Mbiti, 1969, p. 106).

"Whose fault is it if no one knows about the philosophy of your grandfather and mine? Is it not your fault and mine? We are the intellectuals of (Africa). It is our business to distill this philosophy and set it out for the world to see", (Samkange, 1980).

ORIGINS AND SPERAD OF UBUNTU

Migration map from Google

Ubuntu is more...

Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, former President of Tanzania promoted ujamaa

Ubuntu is spiritual and theological Desmond Tutu popularised ubuntu

NELSON MANDELA
1918 ~ 2013

Former President, South Africa said ubuntu has several aspects

UBUNTU IS A PHILOSOPHY

Middle Eastern philosophy e.g. Islamic philosophy

Western philosophy

Eastern philosophy e.g. Chinese philosophy

African philosophy e.g. Ubuntu philosophy

Pacific philosophy e.g. Tanoa Ni Veiqaravi

Aboriginal philosophy

UBUNTU MAXIMS/STATEMENTS

- Munhu munhu nevanhu

- Ndiri nekuti tiri

- Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu

- Mambo vanhu

- Chikuru upenyu

- Motho ke motho ka batho

- Mwana ndewemunhu wese

- Umoja ni nguvu

- Ndi nii tondu wanyu

- An dhano nikeche wantie

- Musha mukadzi

- Miti upenyu

WHAT IS UBUNTU?

Ubuntu is a collection of values and practices that black people of Africa or of African origin view as making people authentic human beings. While the nuances of these values and practices vary across different ethnic groups, they all point to one thing – **an authentic individual human being is part of a larger and more significant relational, communal, societal, environmental and spiritual world** (AJSW, 2020).

KEY UBUNTU VALUES AND CONCEPTS

Looking at ubuntu holistically

Individual level

Family level

Community level

Societal level

Environmental level

Spiritual level

SO, OF WHAT IS ROLE OF UBUNTU TO AFRICAN SOCIAL WORK?

UBUNTU SHOULD BE THE FOUNDATION OF OUR SOCIAL WORK PHILOSOPHY

What philosophy shapes our social work? Can western or other philosophies adequately align with African values of family, community and spirituality? No.

UBUNTU SHOULD SHAPE OUR SOCIAL WORK VALUES

Ubuntu shapes our social work ethics, values and principles.

UBUNTU SHOULD SHAPE OUR SELECTION OF LITERATURE

The books we use in social work, together with the theories and frameworks should align with ubuntu philosophy. Is Biestek's 1957 on casework relevant? No. But we have Biestek's book in African libraries today.

African theories link: https://africasocialwork.net/african-theories-of-social-work/

UBUNTU SHOULD SHAPE OUR HISTORY OF AFRICAN SOCIAL WORK

Mai Musodzi Chibhaga-Ayema 1885-1952

Started providing planned social services and advocacy for women around 1910, founded a welfare organisation

Baba Jairos Jiri 1921-1982

Started providing planned social services in 1940, founded a disability organisation
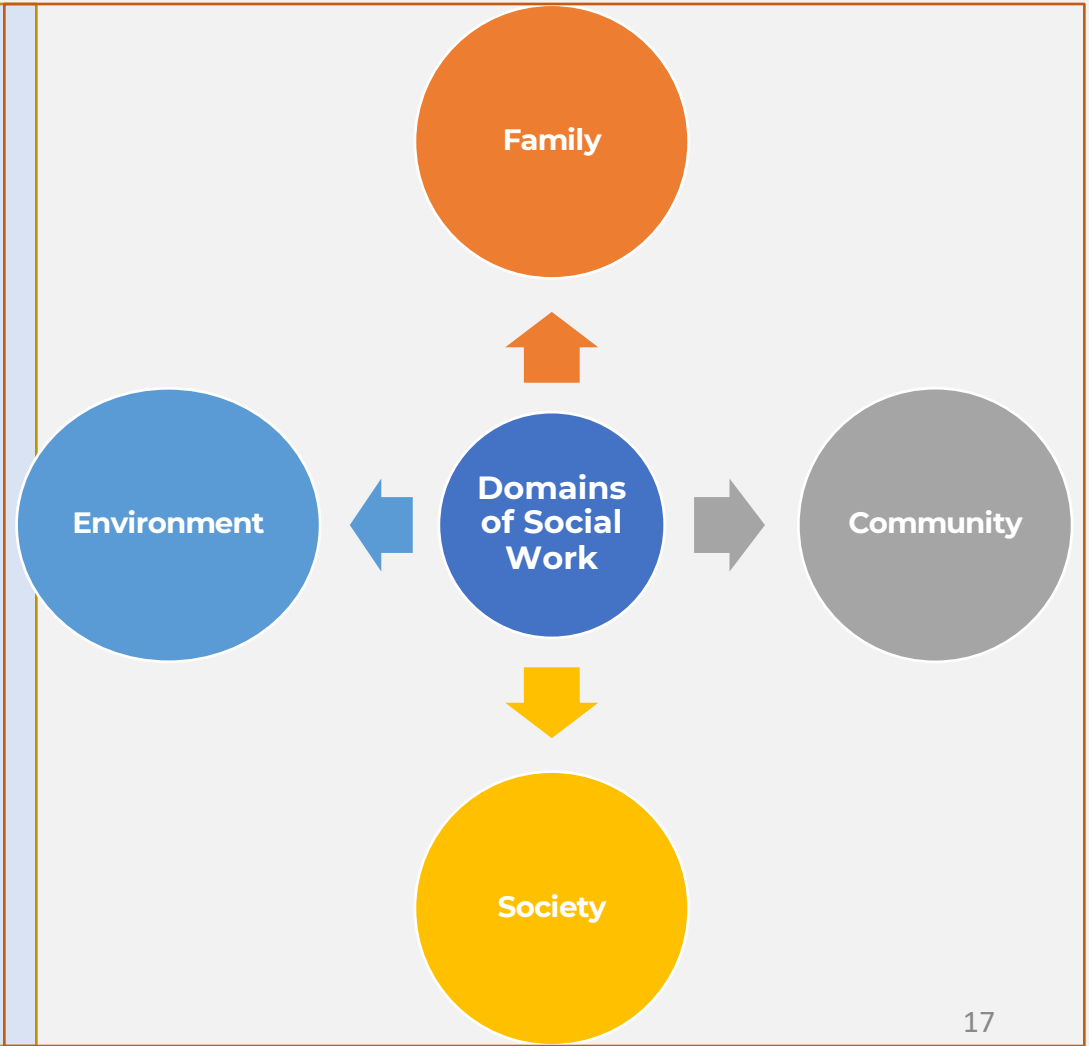
Mkabuko Joshua Nkomo, 1917-1999

Started trade unionism in the early 50s, diploma in social work in 1952; liberator, vice-president of Zimbabwe

DOMAINS OF AFRICAN SOCIAL WORK ARE SHAPED BY UBUNTU

1. Understanding, Developing and Protecting **Families** and their members

2. Understanding, Developing and Protecting **Communities**

3. Understanding, Developing and Protecting **Society** and Nations (Socially, Economically, Politically and Spiritually)

4. Understanding, Utilising & Protecting the **Environment** (Domain 4)

Family

Environment

Domains of Social Work

Community

Society

UBUNTU IS A TOOL DECOLONIZE AFRICAN SOCIAL WORK

Social work has been taught as if Africa has no philosophy of its own.

African knowledges, theories, values and voices that are often sidelined or silenced.

Ubuntu gives African social workers confidence, and makes social work more acceptable to our families, communities and society.

Ubuntu is a tool to decolonise, maintain and sustain indigenise approaches that are often trivialised.

THERE IS MORE FROM UBUNTU. HOW CAN YOU USE UBUNTU IN YOUR ROLE?

1. Leader
2. Practitioner
3. Student
4. Researcher
5. Lecturer
6. Librarian
7. Policy maker
8. Administrator
9. Regulatory board
10. Professional association
11. Author
12. Publisher
13. Retirees