

Tribute to Terry Bamford

Charles Mbugua

It is with profound sadness that I learnt of the untimely death of Terry Bamford, a colleague and my mentor at the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). I send my sincere condolences to his loving wife, Margaret, children and grandchildren, friends and the IFSW fraternity.

I first read about Terry in 1974 when I was a social work student at the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) situated in Nairobi, Kenya. At the time, little did I know that the giant I was reading about, (whose involvement with IFSW began in the early 1970s having qualified as a social worker in the 1960s), would have a very positive impact on my professional and personal life.

Terry's books, such as 'Contemporary History of Social Work: Learning from the Past' have had an impact on my work besides drawing inspiration from them.

His outstanding achievements, such as supporting the British Association's international work and links with IFSW, among other responsibilities, saw him awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 2000 for his service to the community. These achievements have been an inspiration to me and many other social workers across the globe.

I first met Terry in 1982 during a conference in Brighton, United Kingdom. One of the items that the conference discussed was expulsion of South Africa from IFSW on the following ground: South Africa was then under the rule of Apartheid which resulted in the country only sending White representatives. There were no blacks or coloured people able to join the South Africa association.

During the debate Terry struck me, and indeed all the IFSW members, as a sharp and focused debater who cared about the welfare of humanity regardless of race, skin colour or creed. Though a White man, Terry firmly supported the expulsion of South Africa until such a time the country would ensure inclusion of all its races in such forums. His eloquence moved all the members to unanimously support the expulsion of South Africa from IFSW until such a time when the country would respect human rights.

Later, in the year 2000 when I was elected to the IFSW Executive (during a General Meeting in Montreal, Canada), I began to work very closely with Terry. In 2008 IFSW sent me and Terry to South Africa to participate in a symposium convened by the government to make progress with the launch of a fully inclusive association and to oversee the association's elections. This resulted in the reinstatement of South Africa as a full member of IFSW.

I worked closely with Terry and others to set up the Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work (COSW) in 2000. As Joint Chair with Tiong Tan, I greatly appreciated Terry's role in helping to represent social work to the Commonwealth institutions and as IFSW Main Representative to the United Nations – Nairobi, I can testify that Terry has played a key role in turning up the volume of the social work voice across the globe.

For all the years I've worked with Terry he has struck me as a defender of human rights, and a thoughtful and resourceful person, who seeks out the best for all. Terry was the Parliamentarian at several General Meetings, helping the President and the meeting to find their way through difficult debates and challenging issues while always remaining calm, good humoured and well-balanced.

I look forward to the launch of the book Terry was co-editing on the history of British social work which is set to be published in June this year. I'm sure the book, together with all his previous publications and papers, will inspire humanity to embrace the ideals that he advocated and championed.

His broad vision, deep understanding of international dynamics, passionate commitment to social justice, and immense personal integrity will forever guide social workers seeking the best for humanity.

I'm grateful to Almighty God for giving me an opportunity to work with Terry, my mentor and best teacher.

Fare you well until we meet again.

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