



PRESS RELEASE

AU-SARO SECURES BUDGETARY AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR 2014-2017 PROGRAMMES FROM A KEY USA BASED INSTITUTION

- *Official Signing Ceremony of the MoU on 22 January 2014*

Lilongwe, 22nd January, 2014: The African Union Southern African Regional Office (AU-SARO), on behalf of the African Union Commission (AUC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with an American based organization, the National Board of Certified Counselors, International (NBCC-I), to achieve collaboration in the expansion of counseling and guidance services in Africa through the Africa Union. In the context of the MoU, NBCC-I will provide technical support and financial support (as approved by AU Member States) for the implementation of AU-SARO 2014-2017 results based broader programmes. In turn, AU-SARO will incorporate and implement the NBCC programme for youth development, guidance and counseling and Mental Health Facilitation (MHF) for Africa in its Annual Work Plan within the framework of AU-SARO's approved results based broader programmes of 2014-2017.

NBCC is the largest professional counseling certified body in the world and thus through its division NBCC-I is working with organizations around the world to continue the expansion of standards of practice, credentials of counseling globally, and developing mutually beneficial collaborations.

The Minister of Education, Science and Technology of Malawi, Honorable Lucious Kanyumba, MP attended the signing ceremony as the guest of honour. The event was also attended by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Malawi, Honorable Abel Kayembe and other officials of the two ministries. Other guests included African Union Ambassadors to Malawi and the Guidance, Counseling and Youth Development Centre for Africa (GCYDCA) and members of the media.

In his welcome remarks, Dr. Salif Sada Sall said the African Union Commission entered into agreement with the NBCC-I upon understanding that, the two organizations share the same vision of developing African youth through guidance, counseling and Mental Health Facilitation (MHF).



AU Regional Delegate to Southern Africa, Dr. Salif Sada Sall (left) and President and CEO of NBCC Affiliates, Dr. Thomas Warren Clawson signing the MoU at the AU-SARO offices in Lilongwe, Malawi

Further Dr Sall underscored the point that the AUC proudly recognizes and appreciates the unwavering commitment and dedication of the NBCC-I to develop youth in Africa. “AU-SARO has noted with great appreciation the role the NBCC-I have played in professionalizing and institutionalizing guidance and counseling in African countries”, he said. He further added that “I am convinced that the co-operation and collaboration between the AU and NBCC through this Memorandum of Understanding will serve the common objectives of the two organisations and enhance their effectiveness in the development of African countries”.

Explaining the background to the MoU, Chairman of the NBCC-I Board of Directors, Dr. Joseph Douglas Wehrman, said the NBCC International, agreed to the MoU with the AU-SARO on 3rd September, 2013 after recognizing the AU-SARO’s commendable mandate of maintaining relationships between the AU and it’s Member States and other important stakeholders such as the Guidance, Counseling and Youth Development Centre for Africa (GCYDCA). GCYDCA and NBCC International have a long standing cooperative working relationship.

He added that the Mental Health Facilitator program (MHF), is one of the NBCC-I’s activities that is carried out in collaboration with local partners such as educational institutions, government agencies or private enterprises.

According to the President and CEO of NBCC and Affiliates, Dr. Thomas Warren Clawson, the MHF tries to correct the imbalance between mental health care and resources. “Even in wealthy countries, there are not enough trained care providers. Added to that, unmet mental health needs are costly both socially and economically.”



NBCC-I Board of Directors, Dr Joseph Douglas Wehrman (L), NBCC-I Vice President, Wendi Karen Schweiger (C), and AU-SARO Seniors Policy Officer (Planning), Tichawona Shumba (R) conferring at a reception organized in honour of the signing ceremony



AU-SARO and NBCC-I exchanging gifts at a reception at Sunbird Capital Hotel, Lilongwe following the signing of the MoU.

The Vice President, Wendi Karen Schweiger further expanded by saying that the MHF program is designed to improve access to community-based mental health care. Basically, the MHF program comprises a training framework and a defined set of counseling skills, and generates a registry of individual with expertise gained from the training.

“The training component aims at preparing individuals for a variety of basic mental health situation in multicultural and multidisciplinary context” said Schweiger. She added that, “due to the nature and focus of the program, its design, and involves counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, nurses and members of related professionals.”



Malawi Minister of Education, Science and Technology, Dr. Lucious Kanyumba (L) and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation, Ephraim Abel Kayembe (R) posing in picture with the AU-RD to Southern Africa Dr. Sall, and the NBCC-I President Dr. Clawson after the signing ceremony

Malawi Minister of Education, Science and Technology, Lucious Kanyumba, recognized the role of NBCC-I in promoting guidance, counseling and youth development in Africa through capacity building and supporting of formation of Counseling Associations across Africa. He since appealed to the NBCC-I to expand the program to other countries in the SADC region (and beyond) to help accelerate development through youth empowerment.

“We all realize that there can never be national development without pressing emphasis on youth development” reiterated Kanyumba while commending the NBCC-I for the support to the GCYDCA and to Malawi government.

AU-SARO, Lilongwe, Malawi,

Tel: +265 1775335, Email: au-saro@teltech.mw; Website: www.au.int

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AU-SARO secures budgetary and technical support for 2014-2017 programmes from a key USA based institution - official signing ceremony of the MOU on 22 January 2014

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