Strengthening the Social Service Workforce for Child Protection

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Child protection webinar, ASSWA, 03 November 2022.
“Investing in the social service workforce will yield high returns for child protection”
Outline

- Who constitutes this workforce?
- What are their roles?
- Why invest in strengthening the SSW?
Who Constitutes the Social Service Workforce?

- Professionals And Para-professionals
- Governmental And Non-governmental Workforce
- Paid And Unpaid Workers
- Direct service practitioners
- Programme directors & managers
- Case managers & Case workers
- Researchers
- Educators
- Advocates & lobbyists
- Policy Makers
- …

https://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/

A variety of professional and para-professional workers serving the social service system

- Different actors with different roles, functions, competencies and skills
SSW Roles in Child Protection

**Macro level:**
- Promotive services

**Mezzo – communities**
- Preventative services

**Micro - Families & children**
- Preventative services:
- Response services

- Policy development
- Research, education and training
- Advocacy – representation-voice
- Resource mobilisation
- Programme design
- Management and supervision
- Social & gender norm transformation

- Early detection – children and families at risk
- Strengthening child protection structures
- Deliver basic social services
- Community sensitization
- Build and harness community partnerships
- Livelihoods development /IGAs

- Case management
- Counselling and psychosocial support
- Reporting
- Referral and linkages to resource systems
- Direct income support / social assistance
Why invest in SSW Strengthening?....

- Child protection and delivery of other services to address multiple vulnerabilities is not charity.
- Requires specialised skills, knowledge & specific competences, and some theoretical grounding.
- Demands high level ethical decision making and professional accountability.
- Inadequately prepared, and/or unsupported workforce could do more harm to an already vulnerable population.
- A high quality, effective and efficient workforce does not just happen – requires carefully planning, developing and supporting the workforce in a sustainable manner.
Framework for Strengthening the Social Service Workforce

What works?

Planning the Workforce
- Adopt a strategic approach to planning the SSW
- Collect and share HR data and promote data-driven decision making
- Improve recruitment, hiring, and deployment practices and systems
- Build alliances to strengthen leadership and advocacy among stakeholders

Supporting the Workforce
- Develop or strengthen systems to improve, sustain, and regulate the SSW
- Develop tools, resources, and initiatives to improve job satisfaction and retention
- Support professional associations in their efforts to enhance the professional growth and development of the SSW

Developing the Workforce
- Align education and training for SSW with effective workforce planning efforts
- Ensure curricula incorporate both local and Indigenous knowledge as well as international best practices for improving the well-being of children and families
- Strengthen faculty and teaching methods
- Provide a broad range of professional development opportunities for workers

https://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/
## Issues & Challenges

### Planning the workforce

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lack of comprehensive information on the existing workforce: Who, what, where…</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Projected human resource requirements for child protection services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gaps in recruitment, hiring and deployment practices: Roles Vs qualification &amp; skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited clarity on who constitutes the workforce</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited info &amp; planning of the community based para-professional workforce</td>
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<td>Low staffing levels – established &amp; filled positions</td>
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Issues and challenges

Developing the workforce

- Weak alignment between education and practice needs
- Low involvement of practitioners in education
- Curriculum delivery methods, including planning and delivery of field practice education
- Limited specialized training at post graduate level
- Limited opportunities for continuous professional development
Issues and Challenges

Supporting the Workforce

- Poor remuneration and tooling
- Gaps in support supervision, mentorship & coaching
- Lack of adequate financial and logistical support e.g. physical infrastructure, Means of Transport
- Absence of strong professional associations for lobby, visibility, advocacy, and support
- Absence of legislation and institutional mechanisms for regulation of SSW
Conclusions & Implications

- There is increasing recognition of the role and importance of the Social Service Workforce in the child protection sector across countries.
- Recent child protection system strengthening endeavours have brought to bear, the need to pay more attention to the workforce.
- Strengthening the social service workforce is a strategic undertaking that has to be intentional and systematic.
  - Short - Medium-long term goals accompanied by action
  - Important: Identifying where we are and where we want to be and crafting out the road map.
Suggestions

**Planning**

- Mapping of the available social service workforce at country level
- Develop a SSW strengthening framework that specifies goals, objectives, strategies and resource requirements
- Streamline recruitment and deployment practices in both government and nongovernmental sectors
- Establish/Improve mechanisms for systematic and up-to-date data on the SSW

**Developing**

- Develop and implement a competency framework for different cadres of the SSW at national level
- Strengthen partnerships to improve education and training – Education & Practice
- CPD: Plan and implement regular in-service training according to priority skills and competences – motivate uptake

**Supporting**

- Evidence based advocacy and lobby for increased resource allocation to child protection services.
- Strengthen Supervision and mentorship
- Strengthen professional associations – mutual support, lobby, advocacy, CPD.
- Strengthen linkages between govt & non-governmental workforce.
- Progressively improve work environment & employment terms & conditions
THANK YOU!