1.1 What is the social service workforce?

A strong social service workforce is comprised of paid and unpaid, governmental and nongovernmental professionals and para professionals working to ensure the healthy development and well-being of children and families.

The social service workforce focuses on preventative, responsive and promotive programs that support families and children in our communities by alleviating poverty, reducing discrimination, facilitating access to needed services, promoting social justice, and preventing and responding to violence, abuse, exploitation, neglect and family separation.

The social service workforce stands on the front lines of addressing the most pressing issues facing our societies today, but the impact of their work depends on receiving the proper political and financial support. Failing to strengthen the workforce means limiting the effectiveness of programs and wasting valuable resources. A well-planned, well-developed, and well-supported workforce is better equipped to support families and children to reach their full potential and better recover from emergency situations and crises.

The Global Social Service Workforce Alliance has developed and compiled many resources that provide detail on workforce data as well as the functions, roles and competencies of the social service workforce. For more information, please visit www.socialserviceworkforce.org

1.2 The Global Social Service Workforce Alliance

The Global Social Service Workforce Alliance (the Alliance) is a non-profit network of 1,300 people across 115 countries. It works toward a world where a well-planned, well-developed and well-supported social service workforce effectively delivers promising practices that improve the lives of vulnerable populations. The mission of the Alliance is to promote the knowledge and evidence, resources and tools and political will and action needed to address key social service workforce challenges, especially within low- to middle-income countries. The Alliance pursues this by:

- Serving as a convener for an inclusive, representative network of stakeholders including government organizations, nongovernmental organizations, academic institutions, donor groups, professional associations and community practitioners to create a forum for discourse and collective learning.
- Advancing knowledge by deriving, organizing and disseminating critical evidence-based research, resources, tools, models and best practices.
- Advocating for workforce-supportive policy reforms at the global and national levels.

The Alliance is funded in part through the Coordinating Comprehensive Care for Children (4Children) project, a five-year USAID funded project implemented by a consortium of organizations led by Catholic Relief Services. The Alliance is also funded by GHR Foundation. Tides Center acts as the fiscal sponsor and host of the Alliance. An eleven-member Steering Committee oversees and guides the direction and development of the Alliance and provides support to the Alliance Secretariat.

1.3 Purpose of the Global Advocacy Toolkit

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Through outreach to advocates and practitioners in the social service workforce and allied health groups, we have heard that a stronger "common narrative" is needed to advocate for the social service workforce to increase support from decision-makers and opinion leaders at the global, regional and national levels. Creating a "common narrative" or a common advocacy goal has different meanings for different people, but implies a desire to use the same starting point of facts and messaging when developing a joint advocacy movement. Research shows that the widespread use of a common narrative can be a key factor in gaining political priority for social and health issues.[1] Recent developments on national and regional levels suggest that interest in strengthening the social service workforce is gaining momentum among policy and decision makers, and a window of opportunity for leaders and advocates to increase support for the workforce currently exists.

The purpose of this Global Advocacy Toolkit is to provide advocates with a common set of tools and messages with which to bring about **greater political and programmatic priority for strengthening the social service workforce**.

This Toolkit is research based, solutions-focused and includes lessons from behavioral science and original research on the most effective ways to communicate to policy and decision-makers. It outlines the relevance of advocacy, communications and highlights concrete steps for the social services workforce Ambassadors, practitioners and researchers to develop their own context-specific advocacy plans.

The methodology used for the development of the Global Advocacy Toolkit is a combination of desktop research and interviews with experts in the field. While the interviewees are experts in their particular areas and cover different geographical regions of the world, several are closely affiliated with the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance. To mitigate the impact of bias regarding the status of the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance, experts from other networks and organizations were also interviewed and message testing was extended to a wider group of respondents.

While the development of evidence-informed communications is a broad and complex topic with regionally and culturally specific challenges and opportunities, we believe that these findings offer lessons for the social service workforce's communications outreach that are applicable across many settings. This Global Advocacy Toolkit has been designed to allow for localization to fit national contexts by the members and champions of the Alliance to adjust their advocacy efforts to best suit their local needs.

Despite the extensive testing and research carried out in the development of the messaging contained in this toolkit, as with all communications and advocacy efforts, it is advisable to continue to test and refine these messages within different settings and with local target audiences to achieve the most effective results.

1.4 How to use the Global Advocacy Toolkit

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

The toolkit will provide you with research insights into what works when talking to policy and decision-makers and developing an advocacy outreach. After each section in chapter 4 we will provide you with guidance and tools to create your own context-specific advocacy plan. It can be adjusted to a specific issue and address national or regional settings. The last section of the toolkit provides you with additional advocacy tools that can be helpful for outreach to your target audience.

---

[1] Shiffman J, Smith S. (2007), Generation of political priority for global health initiatives: a framework and case study of maternal mortality. The Lancet, 370:1370-79.