HOW TO **STRENGTHEN** OUR **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.

Failing to strengthen the workforce means limiting the effectiveness of programs and wasting valuable resources. The following strategies and examples illustrate how 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.

A **strong social service workforce** is an investment in the **resilience of our society.**

Plan the Workforce

Adopt a strategic approach to planning the social service workforce

Moldova's collaborative development of a national strategy to reform the residential childcare system expanded the workforce and family support services. As a result, a well-planned network of providers support family-based care.[1]

Collect and share HR data and promote data-driven decision-making

Following a national HR analysis in 2011 in Uganda, regular reviews of workforce data facilitate workforce planning and budgeting. Combined with leadership capacity building and child protection training, staffing levels have increased by 20%.[2]

Improve recruitment, hiring, and deployment practices and systems that take into account urban, periurban and rural areas and decentralization plans

In order to improve the ratio of social workers providing support to over 2.1 million vulnerable children, Mozambique introduced a 5-tier system of worker qualifications and is standardizing training and salary guidelines for each tier.[3]
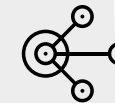
Build alliances to strengthen leadership and advocacy among stakeholders

An initiative in Indonesia collaborates across governmental and civil society stakeholders to ensure that all children grow up in a loving home, especially in natural disaster situations. It focuses on shifts in policies and resources to enable access to quality services provided by well-trained social workers to prevent institutionalization of children.[4]

Develop the Workforce

Align education and training for the workforce with effective planning efforts

Through a strategic mapping of the Child Protection in Emergencies sector ensuring the well-being of children in conflict and disaster situations, practitioners were able to determine the barriers to training of practitioners and align skill needs in an emergency situation with specific training efforts.[5]

Ensure curricula incorporate both local/ indigenous knowledge as well as international best practices

In Afghanistan, community child protection workers and service users determined competency standards and then with government and international experts, developed national social work standards and training curricula for three levels of social workers.[6]

Strengthen faculty and teaching methods

In the UK, job satisfaction for social workers ensuring child well-being is closely linked with graduates' beliefs about preparedness for the job: Of all the social workers not satisfied with their job, 33% said they did not feel prepared for it. By adapting teaching methods and fieldwork to job requirements, schools can ensure that students are prepared and have a higher job satisfaction.[7]

Provide broad range of professional development opportunities for workers

Ensuring pre-service and in-service training opportunities for child welfare workers in the US showed a positive impact on retaining workers, reducing turnover costs and ensuring positive program outcomes for children and their families.[8]

Support the Workforce

Support professional associations in their efforts to enhance the growth and development of the workforce

A study highlighted that professional associations play an effective role in theorizing change, endorsing local innovations to social challenges and reframing professional identities.[9]

Develop and strengthen systems to improve workforce performance

To prevent job stress and increase team performance, a program in South Africa successfully offered psychosocial support to its child care workers serving vulnerable children and orphans.[10]

Improve job satisfaction and retention

Staff turnover costs for agencies in the US are estimated to be US$54,000 per each worker leaving an agency.[11] Improving caseloads, supervision and working conditions positively impact morale and retention.[12]

CALL TO ACTION

Policy and decision-makers can ensure the resilience of our society by investing in the planning, development and support of the social service workforce to give them the tools and resources they need to tackle the most pressing issues facing us today.

Visit **socialserviceworkforce.org** to learn more about how you can strengthen the social service workforce.

GLOBAL SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE ALLIANCE

[1]Better Care Network and the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance (2015), The Role of Social Service Workforce Development in Care Reform. [2]The State of the Social Service Workforce 2016 Report, A Review of Five Years of Workforce Strengthening [3]The State of the Social Service Workforce 2016 Report, A Review of Five Years of Workforce Strengthening [4]Save the Children (2013). Changing the paradigm: Save the Children's work to strengthen the child protection system in Indonesia 2005-2012. Jakarta, Indonesia: Save the Children Indonesia Country Office. [5]Save the Children and Linksbridge, SPC (2015). Child Protection in Emergencies capacity building: Mapping and market analysis. [6]Bragin, M., Tosone, C., Ihrig, E., Mollere, V., Niazi, A., Mayel, E. (2014). Building culturally relevant social work for children in the midst of armed conflict: Applying the DACUM method in Afghanistan. International Social Work. [7]Sharpe, E. et. Al. (2011). Into the Workforce - Report from a study of new social work graduates, 2011. [8]Munson, S. (2006). Components of an effective child welfare workforce to improve outcomes for children and families: What does the research tell us?, Children's Defense Fund. [9]Greenwood, R., Suddaby, R., & Hinings, C. R. (2002). Theorizing change: The role of professional associations in the transformation of institutionalized fields. Academy of management journal, 45(1), 58-80. [10]Thurman, T.R., Yu, S., & Taylor, T.M. (2009). Care for Caregivers: A psychosocial support model for child and youth care workers serving orphans and vulnerable children in South Africa. [11]National Child Welfare Workforce Institute, (2016). Why the Workforce Matters. [12]National Child Welfare Workforce Institute, Workforce Development Planning & Assessment Tool Kit (2016).