

WHAT ARE THE CORE COMPETENCIES OF PARA PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE WORKERS WHO WORK WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES?

REPSSI
Psychosocial
Support Forum

Victoria Falls,
Zimbabwe

September 1-3,
2015

AGENDA

- **Overview of the Alliance, Interest Groups, and IGPP's Work to Date**

Ms. Zeni Thumbadoo, MA, Deputy Director, National Association of Child and Youth Care Workers (NACCW), South Africa

- **“Introduction to the Para Professional Functions and Competencies”**

Mr. Patrick Onyango Mangen, MSc, Country Director, TPO Uganda, Uganda

- **“Testing and Applying the Para Professional Functions and Competencies in Uganda – and Beyond: An Interactive Demonstration”**

Mr. Ismael Ddumba-Nyanzi, MSc, MA, Research and M&E Specialist, Department of Social Work and Social Administration, Makerere University, Uganda

- **Q&A**

- **Group Exercise**

- **Discussion**

- **Closing Remarks**

WHO IS THE SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE?

Zeni
Thumbadoo,
NACCW

THE SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE

- Social service workers create protective environments for healthy development and well-being by:
 - tackling poverty
 - reducing discrimination
 - promoting social justice
 - ensuring protection from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect
 - providing needed services
- to care for and support those who need it most.



ABOUT THE GLOBAL SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE ALLIANCE

Vision

The Global Social Service Workforce Alliance works toward a world where a well-planned, well-trained and well-supported social service workforce effectively delivers promising practices that improve the lives of vulnerable populations.

Mission

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.

Approach

Serve as a convener for an inclusive, representative network of stakeholders to create a forum for discourse and collective learning

Advance knowledge by deriving, organizing and disseminating critical evidence-based research, resources, tools, models and best practices

Advocate for workforce-supportive policy reforms at the global and national levels

RECENT ACTIVITIES

- **State of the Social Service Workforce Report**

- First annual report and executive summary
- Goals: share data and trends and establish evidence base
- 15 countries

- **2nd Annual Global Social Service Workforce Alliance Symposium**

- 3 panels presented on planning, developing & supporting SSW
- 365 attendees in person and via webcast
- Presentations, summary and webcast posted online

- **National Association of Child Care Workers' Conference, Cape Town**

- Plenary session panel on child & youth care work
- Presented on paraprofessional competencies
- 1000+ attendees



ALLIANCE INTEREST GROUPS

- **Interest Group on Building the Evidence Base for Social Service Workforce Strengthening**
 - *SSWS Indicators in partnership with MEASURE Evaluation*
 - *Research Matrix*
 - *Performance Indicators*
- **Interest Group on Para Professionals in the Social Service Workforce**
 - *Guiding Principles for Para Professionals*
 - *Competency Framework for Para Professionals*

WHAT ARE PARA PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE WORKERS? - 1

- **To date, there is no agreed upon and recognized definition for a paraprofessional social service worker at either the global or regional level**
- **This is especially true within the African context, where a range of different kinds of paraprofessionals have rapidly been trained and deployed to fill existing gaps of professional social service workers**
- **The term para professional refers to someone who is typically not university educated (i.e., does not have a degree in the social service field)**

WHAT ARE PARA PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE WORKERS? - 2

- Paraprofessionals receive **specialized courses providing foundational skills in basic social service delivery**, which can vary by context and need and often consist of a series of short courses and field experiences in order to quickly produce graduates who can begin working with communities in need.
- Paraprofessionals take on a **myriad of titles and roles** within the larger social welfare system (Davies, 2009; Bess, Lopez & Tomaszewski, 2011; Mendenhall, 2012; Mwansa, 2012)
- Paraprofessional workers can be **paid or volunteer** and can work within **government structures**, as well as in **civil society organizations** (Mendenhall, 2012)

PARA PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE WORKERS: VARIATIONS BY LOCALE OR FUNCTION

- May be identified as **volunteers, community workers** or by other names specific to a particular program or function
- Where more specific professional categories exist, may be related to these groups, e.g. **para social workers, auxiliary child and youth care workers or social work assistants, etc.**
- Where specialty areas are not present may simply be called **outreach or community workers**

PARA PROFESSIONALS IN THE SSW INTEREST GROUP

- Identified as **priority area** in initial Alliance planning
- Initially convened in **October 2013**
 - Currently there are **22** participants on our member list from seven different countries in North America, Europe and Africa
- Survey of interest group participants identified **advocacy, sharing experiences across countries, and developing competencies of para professionals** as key issues
 - Group has developed a set of principles for para professional social service workers as well as worker functions, competencies and implications for programs and training.

EXAMPLES OF TYPES OF SOCIAL SERVICE PARA PROFESSIONALS & LEVELS OF INTERVENTION*

Substantial overlap between the groups particularly where there are multiple para professionals serving these needs

Para or Auxiliary Child And Youth Care Workers work developmentally/therapeutically in the life space of children and families using daily life events as their focus of intervention.

Para Social Workers may focus more on systems levels to identify children or other vulnerable populations at risk, assess needs and strengths and develop a service plan including direct support but may also include coordination of services with other resources where they exist or can be brokered.

Para Professional Community Development Workers intervene with some specific focus on community levels, which may include economic empowerment, engaging community stakeholders and the like on behalf of these vulnerable groups.

*Names may vary by location

INTRODUCTION TO THE PARA PROFESSIONAL FUNCTIONS AND COMPETENCIES

Patrick
Onyango
Mangen,
TPO Uganda

PARA PROFESSIONAL FUNCTIONS AND COMPETENCIES

- **Generic/Core functions developed to strengthen service programs and training programs for para professionals working as direct care workers in the social service sector.**
 - Serve as a useful base to develop programs, however will always need to be supplemented by functional areas and competencies related to the context or specific discipline or to those served by the para professional workers
 - Generic in order to apply to most para professional cadres, but all para professionals not expected to need all of these competencies
- **Specific groups (e.g. Child and Youth Care Workers, Para Social Workers) may need specific functions and competencies which are integrated with the generic/core competencies to use in training and service programs.**

PARA PROFESSIONAL FUNCTIONS AND COMPETENCIES

- Generic/Core functions identified, each with competency areas for practice and training
- Function areas include:

- | |
|--|
| • <i>Communication Skills</i> |
| • <i>Work with children, youth and families</i> |
| • <i>Applies knowledge related to client needs</i> |
| • <i>Community Work</i> |
| • <i>Collaboration Skills</i> |
| • <i>Organization and Leadership</i> |
| • <i>Monitoring and Evaluation Activities</i> |
| • <i>Developing Self and Others</i> |

FUNCTION # 1: COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS

Para Professional Functional Areas	Para Professional Practice Competencies	Para Professional Training Competencies
<p>Communicating with families and other workers in the unique cultural context</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows cultural competency through the correct use of body language, greetings and who is addressed first (protocol) • Understands ethical values and cultural practices of the local community and uses this understanding to facilitate effective communication • Gathers, conveys, and receives information, along with completing assigned written information under direct supervision • Communicates child protection, violence and abuse messages effectively to families and groups • Uses child/client friendly basic communication methods • Identifies and applies relevant information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates cultural competency in various settings, especially related to the local context • Demonstrates ethical values at the community level • Demonstrates clear, concise and correct verbal and written communication • Demonstrates basic listening and responding skills • Demonstrates the use of child-friendly communication methods • Explains how communication with children differs from adults • Demonstrates ability to promptly and appropriately following instructions • Demonstrates ability to communicate regarding available services

VALIDATING THE CYCW FUNCTIONS AND COMPETENCIES IN KENYA



- **FICE-Kenya, Make Me Smile, assisted with identifying participants for validation process**
 - **2 focus groups**
 - **Questionnaires**
 - **Professional facilitator**

FINDINGS FROM KENYA TESTING

- **Need to reformulate the competencies whereby there is a ‘macro’ competency statement (as currently formulated) followed by more specific and detailed mezzo/micro descriptions**
- **In future testing, workers could report on how frequently he/she performs the function, how important they think the competency is to responding to the needs of the child/youth/caregiver, and how essential they think the competency is to someone entering the para-profession.**

**TESTING AND APPLYING
THE PARA PROFESSIONAL
FUNCTIONS AND
COMPETENCIES IN
UGANDA – AND BEYOND:
AN INTERACTIVE
DEMONSTRATION**

Ismael
Ddumba-
Nyanzi,
Makerere
University

TESTING OVERVIEW

■ Context

- Para-professional social service workers take on a myriad of titles and roles within the Ugandan child protection system.

■ Purpose of the validation

- To assess the relevance of the functions and competencies framework, applying it to a specific group of para professional workers: para-social workers.

■ The Process

- Participants: para-social workers and supervisors
- 4 group interviews, in 2 different locations – urban and rural (Bwesumbu Sub-county, Kasese district and Kasawo sub-county, Mukono district)
- Each session lasted, on average, 3 hours.

VALIDATION STEPS

- **Step I: Participants were asked to write down (on sticky notes) what they perceived to be the functions/role of para-social workers (PSWs)**
- **Step II: Participants were asked to group the sticky notes into clusters with similar responses on separate flip charts**
- **Step III: Each cluster was labeled as a common function. (See example on next slide)**

EXAMPLES OF LABELED CLUSTERS

Function area		Example of responses clustered together
Communication (sensitize/teach/educate)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitizing communities about the rights of children and roles and responsibilities of caregivers • Sensitizing community about dangers of early marriage • Sensitization of parents about girl education • Providing information about child protection services available in the community
Working with Vulnerable Children and Families	Supportive Counseling + Mediation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mediation in case of domestic violence • Counseling victims of abuse
	Case management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify cases of child abuse, and refer victims or report to CDO, police and make follow up (case management) • Reporting cases of child abuse to CDO and other duty bearers such as police

VALIDATION STEPS - 2

- **Step IV:** For each function, participants were asked to write down (on colored sticky notes) the skills and knowledge required that specific function.
- **Step V:** Participants developed a function, skills and knowledge matrix by putting group responses next to associated function. For example:

Function area	Knowledge & Skills (competency)
Case management (identify child abuse case, report/refer victim to CDO or police)	Problem solving skills Knowledge of child rights/ ability to recognize child abuse and identify child protection risk Knowledge of child protection Laws Case management procedure Effective communication skills...

VALIDATION STEPS - 3

- **Step VI: Participants were asked to review the matrix for any missing function or skills/knowledge relating to each function**
- **Step VII. The key functional areas outlined in functions and competencies framework were presented on flipchart paper, and participant were asked:**
 - To identify anything missing from the clusters that exists in the framework
 - To identify any missing functions and/or competencies
 - Whether the functions and/or competencies presented in the framework were relevant to their work.

FINDINGS - 1

- **Functions and competencies outlined in the framework are applicable to relevant to the work of para-social workers in Uganda**
- **Communication, direct work with vulnerable children and families, community work** were identified as the most relevant functional areas.
- **Collaboration (building collaborative relationships, applying knowledge related to client needs (functional expertise)** was also perceived to be critical to the worker of PSWs. These however were not viewed as independent functional areas, per se; rather, they were perceived to be cross-cutting and/or embedded in the aforementioned three.

FINDINGS - 2

- **Functions and competencies that weren't directly stated but were implied through examples**
 - Organization and leadership
 - Monitoring and evaluation – PSWs as “watch dogs”
 - Developing self and others – “need for ongoing training”
- **Missing from the framework**
 - Material support to vulnerable children (e.g., provision of scholastic materials to vulnerable children)

Q&A

GROUP EXERCISE

GROUP EXERCISE – STEP 1

- 1. Split into groups by the para professional category you most closely associate with or are familiar with:**
 - a. Para social workers**
 - b. Para community development workers**
 - c. Other para professional social service workers**

GROUP EXERCISE - STEPS 2 AND 3

- 2. Write down on sticky notes all of the functions associated with your assigned para professional group and post them on the wall.**
- 3. Work together to group the sticky-notes into clusters with similar responses. Label each cluster as a common function.**

GROUP EXERCISE - STEP 4

4. What skills and knowledge are required to carry out each of the functions? List these responses on different colored sticky notes and stick them next to the associated functions within each cluster.

GROUP EXERCISE - STEP 5

- 5. Compare your group's functions and competency clusters to the framework.**
 - Is there anything missing from your clusters that exists in the framework?
 - If there are missing functions and/or competencies, what are they?
 - Are these functions and/or competencies relevant to your work?
 - How relevant?

GROUP EXERCISE - STEP 6

6. Discuss with your group about possible gaps in the framework:

- **Are there any functions or competencies in your clusters that are missing from the framework?**
- **What's missing?**
- **How important are these missing functions/competencies?**

FINAL DISCUSSION AND Q&A

CLOSING REMARKS

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**Thank
you**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,
PLEASE VISIT OUR BOOTH OR WEBSITE
WWW.SOCIALSERVICEWORKFORCE.ORG**

