

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE STRENGTHENING IN CARE REFORM

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Network**





Better Care Network

Vision

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.

BCN works by fostering **collaboration, research and information sharing** on family strengthening and alternative care, and **advocating** for changes to national and global policies to improve children's care situations.

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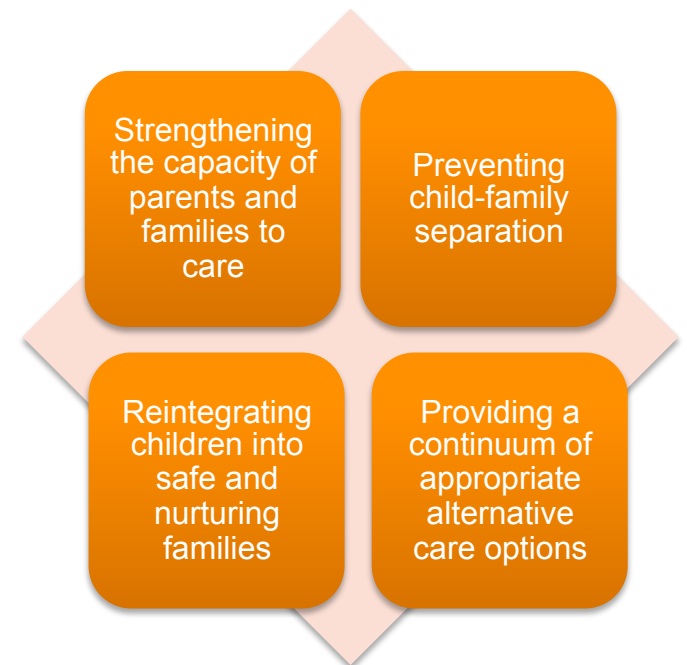
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CONTEXT

- Protecting children without family care
- Children in alternative care
- Children at-risk of being without parental care
- Central role of family





INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

- Case studies of 3 countries
- Literature review
- Key informant interviews



DEFINING CARE REFORM

CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

- Structures, functions, capacities to prevent / respond to abuse, neglect & exploitation
- Promotion of better care & greater family support
- Community-based child protection mechanisms

RESIDENTIAL CARE

- Negative impact of institutions, orphanages, children's homes
- Deinstitutionalization & reintegration programs

INVESTMENT IN EARLY YEARS

- Research on importance of critical early periods of development

Strong, aligned, competent social service workforce is critical to care reforms at all levels!



UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE

Social service system the system of interventions, programs & benefits provided by governmental, civil society / community actors to ensure the welfare and protection of socially or economically disadvantaged individuals and families.

Social service workers create protective environments for healthy development and well-being:

- tackling poverty
- reducing discrimination
- promoting social justice
- ensuring protection from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect
- providing needed services



SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE IN CHILD PROTECTION

- Professional / paraprofessional
- Formal / informal
- Paid / unpaid
- Governmental / non-governmental
- Allied professionals
- Service / care providers



STRUCTURE OF THE CASE STUDIES

- Overview of reform context
 - Policy framework
 - Stakeholders
- Planning for, developing & strengthening social service practices
- Developing, resourcing and supporting the workforce in care reform



IMPLICATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Changing paradigms around care and protection requires a multipronged approach to workforce strengthening:

- Engaging a diverse set of actors in the change process
- Reforming policy and building an evidence base
- Developing and strengthening strategies and approaches in practice
- Planning for, developing, and supporting the workforce
- Shifting human and financial resources

ENGAGING A DIVERSE SET OF ACTORS

- Range of cadres, skills, professional levels for continuum of family support services & alternative care
- Collaboration & partnership across sectors / levels with meaningful involvement = common visions, strategies, interventions
- Strong coordination at the national level
 - Assess, plan for, and build the workforce
 - Encourage cooperation
 - Link with broader social service reform
 - Advocate for more human resources
 - Ensure awareness of and support for national strategies

- Alliances / networks build awareness
- Partnerships - important link in identifying, training, and preparing the social service workforce
 - Universities, vocational, technical schools
 - Policy-makers & practitioners
- Critical role of community mechanisms (even informal) in child protection - flexible and contextual
- Faith community / faith-based organizations key actors in protection and care of children without adequate parental care

REFORMING POLICY & DEVELOPING EVIDENCE BASE FOR REFORM & WORKFORCE

- Establishing national coordination mechanisms for policy and workforce strategies
- Incorporation of levels professional, paraprofessional, community workers
 - Policies / standards
 - Parameters, criteria for professionalization, linkages, referral points
- Supporting research / assessment to facilitate reform
- Building contextually relevant evidence base
 - Pilot initiatives of nongovernment partners

DEVELOPING & STRENGTHENING STRATEGIES IN PRACTICE

- Developing alternative family-based care requires the availability of social services at the community level and a skilled social service workforce to implement them
- Interlinking care reform with social welfare reforms helps to build a stronger overall social service system that protects children and helps workers to do their jobs more holistically
- Engaging the participation of caregivers and children in care reform and development of the social service workforce is crucially important

PLANNING, DEVELOPING & SUPPORTING THE WORKFORCE

Planning

- Establishing care reform working groups or coalitions of workforce development stakeholders helps to integrate workforce planning & care reform
- Increasing awareness about the role and value of the workforce through advocacy
- Developing a workforce-supportive legal or regulatory framework – define roles and mandates, accountability & professionalization
- Understanding the current workforce helps with future planning projections

Developing

- Training / technical assistance programs with pre-service and in-service modules
- Curricula development through consensus process that engages - national government, academics, NGO or public practitioners
- Linkages between national and international universities to build capacity of academic partners esp. incorporate practice modules with theory-based learning
- Helping to define competencies, standardize curricula, and promote certification of professional cadres

RETRAINING / REDEPLOYMENT OF RESIDENTIAL CARE WORKERS

- Requires transformation of knowledge, skills & roles
- Engaging residential institution workers in change management
- Involving care workers in the reform process through participatory research / engagement in developing models
- Training and supporting care workers to implement family strengthening and prevention

Support strategies

- Developing professional associations gives the social service workforce a platform for recognition, promotion, advocacy, and knowledge exchange.
- Supervision mechanisms
 - case-by-case support for social workers
 - lowers isolation, one-to-one training, problem-solving on difficult cases
- Peer-to-peer support and platforms for sharing
 - Builds capacity
 - Reduces isolation and burnout
 - Increases peer-to-peer networking, case review meetings, and using technology to connect workers

SHIFTING HUMAN & FINANCIAL RESOURCES IN CARE REFORM

- Coordinating mobilizes public and private resources and aligns use with government strategy
- Advocating for the redirection or allocation of financial resources for care reform and family-based services - role of working groups & alliances
- Supporting care reform through resource provision and human resources development was an important role of donors / NGOs
- Training and capacity-building helped to develop the various cadres, child care curricula, standards of practice
- Leveraging the technical, financial, human resources facilitated through working groups / cooperation with government partners



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