

Key Messages for Advocating for the Social Service Workforce

Developed by the Advocacy Interest Group of the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance

Definition of the social service workforce

The social service workforce is an inclusive concept referring to a broad range of governmental and nongovernmental professionals and paraprofessionals who work with children, youth, adults, older persons, families and communities to ensure healthy development and well-being. The social service workforce focuses on preventative, responsive and promotive services that are informed by the humanities and social sciences, Indigenous knowledges, discipline-specific and interdisciplinary knowledge and skills, and ethical principles. Social service workers engage people, structures and organizations to: facilitate access to needed services, alleviate poverty, challenge and reduce discrimination, promote social justice and human rights, and prevent and respond to violence, abuse, exploitation, neglect and family separation.

**Given the diversities across contexts, this definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels.*

Messages to donor groups, government and multilateral agencies

- 1) As an ally to national and local governments, the social service workforce is critical to achieving more than 65% of the Sustainable Development Goal targets by 2030, according to a recent European Social Network report. The positive impact on children and families depends on the workforce receiving the proper funding and commitments to implement strategies and track progress.
- 2) A professional, trained social service workforce can proactively tackle complex issues, including alleviating poverty, increasing resiliency to shocks, keeping families together, safeguarding and supporting children on the move, and improving health and well-being.
- 3) Through the inclusion of views and experiences of children, youth and adults who have received services into government-led efforts, national workforce strengthening strategies will have greater community impact and support.

Messages to media and general public

- 1) The social service workforce partners with communities, families, and individuals to promote people's strengths, respond to their needs, and problem-solve their challenges.
- 2) The social service workforce is committed to promoting inclusion and equality by advocating to ensure all people can access high-quality services they need.
- 3) Working in government and through community structures, the social service workforce amplifies the impact of other sectors, like health, education, and justice, by facilitating collaboration and connecting people to services.
- 4) Social service workers promote a safe, caring family environment that benefits all children, youth, adults, older persons, families and communities.

Messages to members of the social service workforce

The social service workforce is critical to protecting and realizing the rights of all people, particularly those most excluded or marginalized, and strengthening communities. It is therefore important for members of the social service workforce to be actively engaged as champions and supporters of their profession and workforce. To that end, it is essential that members of the social service workforce:

- 1) Commit to self-care, reflective practice, knowledge-building, and continuous learning;
- 2) Identify and register as professionals in the social service workforce, take pride in your role, understand your impact, and advocate on behalf of the profession;
- 3) Recognize the importance and strength in solidarity and collaboration, and commit to working in coalitions.
- 4) Convene and support community actors, civil society and other actors to intensify advocacy efforts for prioritizing social service workforce strengthening within the global agenda.