



Insights from Moldova:

Role of Collective Impact in Workforce Strengthening

CHANGING THE WAY WE CARE MOLDOVA

Changing the Way We Care is a global care reform initiative that promotes safe, nurturing family care for children reunifying from institutions or at risk of family separation.

Changing the Way We Care Moldova's key partners include Partnerships for Every Child (P4EC), Keystone Moldova, Copil, Communitate, and Familie (CCF) Moldova and AudioViz Moldova.

In March 2022, Changing the Way We Care in partnership with the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MoLSP) launched a Working Group focused on strengthening the social service workforce in Moldova. The Workforce Strengthening Working Group (WG), facilitated by CTWWC partner Keystone Moldova, aimed to improve the continuous training of social workers, strengthen partnerships with academia, and professionalize the supervision of social workers.

The WG's mandate stemmed in part from an assessment that CTWWC conducted in summer 2021 that identified constraints and challenges regarding the training of the social service workforce in the field of child and family protection. The report outlined a set of recommendations, which were later included in Moldova's landmark National Child Protection Program (2022 – 2026).

The WG was the first to be convened using CTWWC Moldova's Collective Impact approach. The Collective Impact approach places an emphasis on using a participatory and inclusive process that seeks to bring together all stakeholders under one umbrella to develop joint solutions to common issues.

The result was a seminal collaboration between the government, academia, and civil society to strengthen and further professionalize the social workers of today and tomorrow.

Changing the Way We Care Moldova's collective impact approach brings together government officials, civil society organizations, people with lived experience, local communities, faith leaders, donors, and academia together to build a sustainable mechanism for care reform, where solutions are developed, tested, measured, and funded in consortium ensuring that no child is left behind.



INSIGHT 1: FORMING COMMON AGENDA

As the umbrella widened and more stakeholders joined the WG, a common agenda emerged. Not only did the stakeholders define the problem together, they had the right people in the room to solve it.



Widening the Umbrella

From the beginning, the Workforce Strengthening Working Group sought to include all the stakeholders that were needed to accomplish the WG's objective. The WG recruited government representatives at the national and local level, public and private social service providers, civil society organizations, and academia to join the group. WG members were encouraged to share information with their networks and enlist other stakeholders, in an effort to continually widen the WG's collective impact umbrella. Within the first few months, the WG group doubled from 15 members to 30 members.

A Common Agenda Forms

As stakeholders came together a common agenda began to form. The government needed to be able to recruit and maintain a qualified and well trained social service workforce. Universities were looking to improve their social work curriculum and recruit new students, and civil society actors had best practices curriculum and training to share. On their own, each stakeholder could only address one aspect of the problem but together they had the ability to strengthen the training system at each stage in the process.

5 Core Aspects of A Collective Impact Approach*

Collective Impact brings people together in a structured way to achieve social change.



COMMON AGENDA

Collectively define problem and share a common vision to solve it



SHARED MEASUREMENTS

Tracking progress in the same way, allowing for continuous learning and accountability.



REINFORCING ACTIVITIES

Integrating participants' many different activities to maximize the end result.



CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATION

Building trust and strengthening relationships.



BACKBONE SUPPORT

Having a team dedicated to aligning and coordinating the work of the group.

*Collective Impact Forum's [The Five Conditions of Collective Impact](https://collectiveimpactforum.org) - collectiveimpactforum.org

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“When you have a challenge...taking kids out of institutions and putting them into safe, protecting homes, with their families...it really does take everybody to be involved, and it's not just the Government, it's not just a particular university, it's not just the workers themselves, it's really all of them coming together and working together, bringing their expertise, to solve this problem.”

Scott Hocklander, USAID Moldova Mission Director

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INSIGHT 2: CREATING TECHNICAL GROUPS FACILITATED SHARED MEASUREMENTS AND TOOLS

Working through technical sub-groups facilitated the use of **shared measurements and tools** to develop the mechanisms and procedures needed to improve the training system.



Role of Technical Groups

The Working Group used technical groups (TG) to maximize collaboration and ensure that as many stakeholders as possible could participate in accordance with their interest and expertise.

The TG composition was established in consultation with stakeholders and based on the tasks and expertise of the institutions and organizations active in the field. This allowed representatives of other institutions and organizations, including individuals, to participate in the meetings of the working group.

Shared Measurements and Tools

Four technical groups were established that included key representatives from government, academia, and civil society.

Each TG had a distinct mandate as well as a series of deliverables they were committed to producing. This tangible list of outputs gave TG members a shared way to measure their progress.

Shared deliverables included:

- components of a quality training course and provider (TG 1)
- how academia and government could work together (TG 2)
- what proper supervision looked like (TG 3)
- evidenced-based curriculum (TG 4)



"We have to continue to strengthen the training system for social workers, but at the same time to increase the working conditions and pay of social workers, and to diversify the specializations of social workers."

Marcel Spatari, Minister of Labor and Social Protection



Structure of Working Group



Technical Group 1: Develop the mechanisms for initial and continuous training of the social service workforce



Technical Group 2: Strengthen the partnership between the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MoLSP) and Academia



Technical Group 3: Improve the mechanism for the professional supervision of social assistance



Technical Group 4: Develop training courses in the field of child protection

INSIGHT 3: ENCOURAGING MUTUALLY REINFORCING ACTIVITIES

As WG members began to collaborate, opportunities arose to build on each others activities and **reinforce their impact** – from strengthening curriculum to reviewing how social service workers are paid and evaluated.



Building on the strengths of stakeholders

Nearly nine months after the WG held its first meeting, a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and four leading Universities – State University of Moldova, Ion Creanga University, Alecu Russo University, and Free International University -- to improve how the social service workforce are trained and supported.

The MoU was a tangible result of months of work by the technical groups. It outlined a list of areas of cooperation that built on the expertise of each stakeholder while multiplying the impact of their activities.

Initiatives stemming from the MoU include:

- **Internships** for students studying social work that help to connect academic study with real-life experience.
- **Teachers** will be consulted during the development of public policies around social work.
- Academia involvement in **evaluation of public policies** supporting social work and workers to build a quality-focused training system that focuses on responding to the needs of communities.

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“A social worker at the community level is a facilitator who ensures the connection between vulnerability and solution.”

Dr. Marcela Dilion-Strechie, Program Manager,
Keystone Moldova

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“The multi-sectoral and academic cooperation adds depth to the training of new generations of specialists, who will be more competent and more confident.”

Dr. Valentina Ciumacenco, Vice-Rector,
Free International University from Moldova

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Memorandum of Understanding

Areas of Cooperation

- ✓ Support the Ministry of Labor Social Protection to develop public policies around workforce training.
- ✓ Develop and implement training programs to improve professional competences in the field of child protection.
- ✓ Provide initial and continuous professional training of specialists in the field of social services and child protection to ensure the integration of labor market needs and facilitate employment.
- ✓ Promote dialogue through the participation of academia in the process of development, consultation, implementation, approval and evaluation of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection policies in the field of child protection.
- ✓ Support scientific research on the issues of common interest including the updating social service professional training programs.
- ✓ Strengthen the competencies of specialists in the field of social assistance / child protection, contributing to increasing the attractiveness of the profession and ensuring the labor market with qualified and motivated specialists.

INSIGHT 4: ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN BUILDING TRUST

Frequent **communication** including in-person meetings helped to strengthen the relationships within the WG and solidify the sense of a shared vision and goals.



The Role of Communication

In many ways the success of the Working Group hinged on the strength of the communication among the partners. As communication increased so did trust and as sense of shared vision and goals.

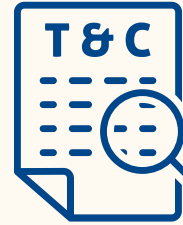
Strong communication starts with shared understanding. It is hard to make progress if stakeholders have a different concept of their role and what is expected of them. To ensure that everyone understood their role, the overall WG and the Technical Groups had Terms of References (ToR). The ToRs laid out the set of expectations for members and detailed a scope of work. It also outlined how the members would work together and what they could expect in terms of support. The ToR laid the foundation to build other communication efforts.

The WG members, all leaders in their respective fields, were a busy group of people and getting members to commit to meetings was a challenge. Flexibility was important as well as taking the time to brief new members. After almost 2+ years of on-line meetings due to COVID restrictions, the WG and TG welcomed in-person meetings as much as possible to help build trust and foster dialogue among members.

Developing the core WG/TG documents was both time and resource intensive. Often, the WG and TG found it useful to break into even smaller groups when technical documents needed to be drafted. The smaller groups would convene to draft recommendations for the larger group's consideration.

Workforce Working Group Communication Methods

Terms of Reference



Terms of Reference set the expectations and scope for the work. It identified how stakeholders will work together in the pursuit of a shared goal.

Consultative Workshops

Consultative workshops brought together key stakeholders in a process that both defined the issue to address and led to the development of a set of solutions.



Small Group Work

Technical Group members were often broken into smaller groups when drafting consultative documents.



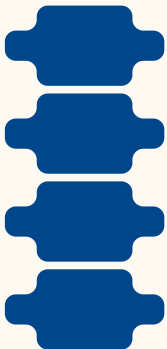
“ Investing in the professionalism of the social service workforce is an investment in Moldova’s most vulnerable children and families.

Ludmila Ungureanu, Director
Changing the Way We Care Moldova

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INSIGHT 5: THE NEED FOR BACKBONE SUPPORT

A key to the WG success was the strong **backbone support** provided by CTWWC partner Keystone Moldova, a trusted and credible organization that offered technical expertise and facilitated building strong relationships within the care reform community.



Backbone Support

In a Collective Impact approach the backbone support provides the critical infrastructure needed to foster cross-sectoral communication, ensure alignment toward a common goal, and increase collaborative opportunities among stakeholders.

In Moldova, CTWWC provides overall backbone support for care reform initiatives while also promoting partner organizations to take the lead in their respective areas on expertise.

For the Workforce Strengthening Working Group, CTWWC turned to Keystone Moldova to provide backbone support due to its expertise in the field and strong relationships with partners. Keystone Program Manager, Dr. Marcela Dillion-Strechie a recognized expert in the field, was appointed as the lead of the Working Group. Marcela, embodies the qualities of ideal Collective Impact leaders. She is collaborative and relationship-oriented, focused on outcomes but also adaptable to new opportunities. Due to her efficient coordination, the WG was able to attract other experts and build trust among stakeholders.

Having different partners provide backbone support helped to strengthened the overall partnership. As partners take on leadership roles it increases their stake in the outcome. Increasingly, the role of backbone support will not be "owned" by one organization but rather a role that many partners can contribute to leading to an overall stronger and more inclusive endeavor.



“Through the methodology of Collective Impact, we are coming together to promote qualitative changes to the training system to ensure that the social service workforce can act quickly and effectively to support the best interest of the child.”

Dr. Marcela Dillion-Strechie, Program Manager, Keystone Moldova



Snapshot:

Social Service Workforce Training

Social Assistance Personnel Training at the University Level (2016 - 2020)

4 Universities offer degrees in Social Work

867 Social worker graduates with licenses in social assistance (2016-2020)

456 Graduates with Master Degrees in Social Work (2016-2020)

476 Students enrolled part-time in social work classes (2016-2020) representing 76% of all social assistance students

Current Civil Society Organization Training programs

12 Social Assistance Workforce Training providers developed a total of 66 training programs in child and family protection



Photo Credit: Schimbator Studio

In November 2023, four leading Universities joined the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection to sign an Memorandum of Understanding focused on improving the training and support of social workers.

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Changing The Way We CareSM (CTWWC) is implemented by Catholic Relief Services and Maestral International, along with other global, national and local partners working together to change the way we care for children around the world. Our principal global partners are the Better Care Network, Lumos Foundation, and Faith to Action. CTWWC is funded in part by a Global Development Alliance of USAID, the MacArthur Foundation and the GHR Foundation.

Need to know more? Contact Changing the Way We Care at, info@ctwwc.org or visit changingthewaywecare.org.

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