

Child Protection in Crisis Uganda: March 2012 Learning Retreat

**Social Welfare Workforce Strengthening:
A Key Component of Child Protection
Systems Building**

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Child Protection in Crisis

Network for Research, Learning & Action

Child Protection Systems

- Child protection systems consist of laws, policies, regulations, structures, capacities, services and interventions across all social sectors - especially social welfare, education, health, security and justice - that support prevention and response to protection-related risks.
- The purpose of the systems approach to child protection is to develop and maintain linkage between different systems in order to meet all child protection needs.

Child Protection systems

- The quality of joint work between the child protection system and other systems is central to the effectiveness of the child protection system, since these systems also provide services to children which directly influence their protection.
- The social welfare system is one of the key sectors that contribute to effective child protection and often is charged with coordination of cross sectorial interventions for child protection. Most children who require child protection responses come to the attention of Social welfare workers.

Social Welfare

- Social welfare includes interventions, programmes, benefits, services and mobilization of local capacity by government and civil society to improve safety and well-being of socially or economically disadvantaged individuals, families, and children (John Williamson (2010)).
- Social welfare generally seeks to prevent, alleviate, or contribute to the solution of recognized social problems, or to improve the well-being of individuals, groups, or communities” (National Association of Social Workers (1971)).

Social Welfare Workforce

- Social Welfare Services are managed by a workforce which is traditionally, defined as including many different types of workers: social workers, para-professional social workers, community workers e.g. Community Development Officers, youth workers, counsellors, and others.
- They facilitate access to shelter, health care, education, economic opportunities, protection services; supervise residential care facilities, foster care and adoption placements; investigate allegations of abuse, violence and neglect; and process and monitor government welfare programmes.

Social Welfare Workforce

- Therefore, Social Welfare workers are change agents who work on prevention of problems, recovery, development at individual and family, community and national level. Their work includes community mobilization, psychosocial support, developing and reforming policies, etc.
- Many people working in social welfare services in Uganda do not have specialised training in social work and social welfare and this affects the quality of services.

Social Welfare Workforce

- Quite often the numbers of the social welfare workforce are inadequate.
- Social Welfare workers quite often require services in health, education, security and justice sectors to ensure adequate support responses for their clients.

A framework for understanding social welfare workforce strengthening efforts



Planning the Workforce

- Carrying out workforce assessments to identify gaps in human resource requirements and promote data driven decision making – may focus on staffing levels and gaps in needed skills to strengthen the delivery of core social welfare functions
- Human resource planning for improved service delivery to orphans and vulnerable children including costing the workforce
- Developing mechanisms for recruiting and hiring staff
- Filling the social welfare gap in services: recruiting volunteer and para-social workers and potential for inclusion in local government

Planning the Workforce

- Generating the political will necessary to implement workforce strengthening efforts.
- Independent audit of the human resource and institutional capacity of the Department of Social Services at national, provincial and district levels
- Workforce realignment and task shifting through establishment of new cadres within the social welfare workforce
- One social worker, many roles: identifying staffing shortages and their implications for effective service delivery

Developing the Workforce

- Identifying and recognising the challenges and inefficiencies within the educational system for Social Welfare workers.
- Developing appropriate social work education and training programs for specific social welfare workforce cadres
- Adapting social work training programs at the institutes of Social Work to establish new cadres of social workers, para-social workers and social work assistants

Developing the Workforce

- Pre-service education, in-service training, professional continuing education, faculty development, and other practical strategies for professionalizing the social welfare workforce and ensuring that educational programs are sufficient to meet the demands of the social welfare system.
- Developing effective codes of conduct for the social welfare workforce
- Establishing institutional child protection policies for NGOs

Supporting the Workforce

- Developing tools, resources, and initiatives to improve job satisfaction and retention
- Develop or strengthen systems to improve and sustain social welfare workforce performance
- Support professional associations in their efforts to enhance the professional growth and development of the social welfare workforce
- Quality care for children through enhanced psychosocial well-being and child protection capacity of community caregivers

Supporting the Workforce

- “Pathing”: developing volunteers into professionals e.g. in South Africa
- Strengthening systems to improve and sustain social welfare workforce accountability and effectiveness
- Quality assurance tools and support provided by social work associations e.g. case management standards and quality standards for programs for orphans and vulnerable children to social welfare worker performance

Conclusions

- Social Welfare Workforce strengthening in respect to child protection systems is about a **well-performing social welfare workforce** that works in ways that are responsive, fair and efficient to achieve the best social welfare and child protection outcomes.
- It requires adequate resources, sufficient staff, fairly distributed; who are competent, responsive and productive.
- Strengthening child protection systems requires strengthening social welfare workforce

Conclusions

- Social Welfare services are important for protection of children and preventing situations that require protection responses. Therefore, strengthening social welfare workforce is inextricably linked with enhancement of protection for children. The need to strengthen the social welfare workforce across the education, health, social welfare and justice sectors is thus a critical component of strengthening child protection systems. Without a strong social welfare workforce, effective child protection will remain a dream

I thank You All