

# STATE OF THE SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE IN SOUTH ASIA



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*Cover: Jamalpur, Bangladesh: Probation officer Jannatul Ferdous, age 36 in the village talking to women and children about the child help line and stopping child marriage. © UNICEF/South Asia 2016/Bronstein.*

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# ACRONYMS

<b>BATSW</b>	Bombay Association of Trained Social Workers (India)
<b>CBCPC</b>	Community Based Child Protection Committee
<b>CPAN</b>	Child Protection Action Network (Afghanistan)
<b>FGD</b>	focus group discussion
<b>GBV</b>	gender-based violence
<b>MoLSAMD</b>	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (Afghanistan)
<b>MSW</b>	Masters of Social Work
<b>NAPSWI</b>	National Association of Professional Social Workers of India
<b>NCWC</b>	National Commission for Women and Children (Bhutan)
<b>NISD</b>	National Institute of Social Development (Sri Lanka)
<b>NGN</b>	Next Generation Nepal (Nepal)
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organization
<b>NHRC</b>	National Human Rights Council (India)
<b>PEPFAR/USAID</b>	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (USA)
<b>PO</b>	Probation officer
<b>SSW</b>	social service workforce
<b>SWAN</b>	Social Workers Association Nepal
<b>TISS</b>	Tata Institute of Social Science (India)
<b>UGC</b>	University Grants Commission (India)
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>VAC</b>	violence against children
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization



India, Dungepur, Ghada Arandía village: Social workers go door to door to register children for a community level child tracking system that was set up by UNICEF and its partner Vaagdhara.

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## I. OVERVIEW

To protect children from violence, abuse and exploitation, as well as support their access to justice and quality care, it is imperative to have an effective child protection system. One critical element of that system is a strong social service workforce with a clear mandate. This workforce can be found within the government, private sector and non-governmental sector; in child protection, education, health and other services; and be part of the paid labour force or not. The social service workforce – paid and unpaid, governmental and non-governmental professionals and para-professionals – provides social supports to children and families in communities in a myriad ways and plays a key role in preventing and responding to violence against children and families. The social service workforce focuses on preventative, responsive and promotive programmes that support families and children by alleviating poverty, reducing discrimination, facilitating access to needed services, delivering services, promoting social justice, and preventing and responding to violence, abuse, exploitation, neglect and family separation. Social service workers are often the first responders to address the multiple forms of violence against children, and this is a major cornerstone of their work.

The UNICEF Child Protection Strategy (2008) called on UNICEF programming in child protection to shift to a systems approach. Within the new Strategic Plan (2018–2021), Goal Area 3 seeks to ensure that every girl and boy is

protected from violence and exploitation. The plan recognizes that in order to achieve this, it is necessary to strengthen the social service workforce as an integral component of a child protection system. An important first step is to analyse and understand the complexity of workforce issues in a given country.

The UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia aims to generate evidence-based knowledge, to accelerate progress in advocacy, policy development, strategy design, programme scale-up and research to better protect children in South Asia. It seeks to increase availability of information on the social service workforce across the region, in order to have a baseline from which to consider its ongoing development.

This report provides information on the current status of the social service workforce in the eight countries in South Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It is structured around global-level indicators outlined in a recent UNICEF ‘Social Service Workforce Strengthening Programme Guidance’ paper. This report describes policies, education, funding and support available to the workforce, and includes data available on the composition of the workforce in each of the eight countries. It identifies innovative practices that may be scaled up and also learned from in other country contexts and incorporates findings on the accountability of the workforce from the

perspective of children. The report highlights unique aspects of each country's workforce, identifies common challenges or trends, and presents implications that countries may consider when developing their country-level action plans.

Information was gathered through a multi-pronged approach, including:

- **Questionnaires:** Questionnaires organized around the Strengthening of the Social Service Workforce Framework were sent to UNICEF country offices, government ministries, NGOs (non-governmental organizations), civil society organizations, university staff and professional associations.
- **Individual interviews:** Information was gained through conversations with UNICEF, NGOs, government officials, universities and other partners.
- **Grey literature:** A range of documents were reviewed for this report written by NGOs, UNICEF and other entities, including child protection mapping reports, country legislation, technical standards and guidance, programming reviews, evaluations and analysis.

- **Peer-reviewed literature:** Journal articles that discussed historical accounts, evidence base, regional trends and analysis of the social service workforce were reviewed.
- **Internet and websites:** Information on associations, government population statistics and other selected information was collected on published pages of websites.

It is important to note some limitations to the data collection. In some instances, current data were difficult to access or were unavailable. Information on current government human resource figures were frequently missing, outdated or possibly inaccurate as were other data such as numbers of graduates across each degree programme in each country. Multiple sources were sought when possible for validation; however, this was also difficult as resources were not consistently available or standardized in a format for comparative analysis. These challenges are found across every region in the world. Often the level of availability of data tells a story in itself and helps point to steps needed to address challenges and strengthen the social service workforce.





India, Tonk, Child Friendly Police of Sadar Police Station: Police woman, Anita, chats with girl students during a school visit.

© UNICEF/South Asia 2016/06/08/ste/tehr

## II. SYSTEMS-BASED APPROACHES: FRAMING A NEW, ACHIEVABLE VISION FOR CHILDREN

Governments in countries across the South Asia region are increasingly becoming more invested in systematic reform approaches to address child protection issues. One of the most pressing concerns in the region is the level of violence against children. Identifying ways to prevent and respond to violence requires a shift to a stronger understanding of structural violence, or the underlying drivers of violence due to differences of power, wealth, privilege, education and health.<sup>1</sup>

Children in South Asia witness a higher rate of violence in the home than any other region in the world, according to the *United Nations Study on Violence against Children* in 2006. The most frequent forms of violence occur between a parent and the child or a child witnessing intimate partner violence between one or both of the child's caregivers.<sup>2</sup> This exposure to violence can have a negative impact on the child's physical, neurological and emotional development and also create future cycles of violence for boys and girls as they replicate interpersonal behaviour and coping strategies they have witnessed early in life.

South Asia reports 30 per cent of women aged 20–24 are married or joined through a similar accord before they become 18 years old.<sup>3</sup> This prevalence of child marriage represents half of the total number of child brides globally. This environment is particularly dangerous for girls

and often leads to sexual abuse and exploitation, which threaten girls' lifelong development. Child trafficking and corporal (physical) punishment happen far too frequently in the region as well and warrant additional focused attention.<sup>4</sup>

South Asia governments in partnership with UNICEF and other child protection advocates are working hard to address risks that threaten children's development. Laws, policies, regulations and services that support enabling environments in the prevention of and response to child protection risks are urgently needed. A systems-based approach, rather than an issue-based response to child protection, embraces a more comprehensive view of children's holistic needs and the linked resources that can be enabled to support them in becoming fully functioning adults. The social service workforce is an integral part of any child protection system. Properly trained and resourced social service workers understand social norms and can oversee research and programming, define priorities and frame multisectoral strategies, leading to more sustainable systems of support for children and families.

However, even as the sector's understanding of social service methods and practices advances, mixed perceptions on the value of the social service workforce persist. This undermines efforts to strengthen the workforce and hinders development of child protection systems.

Nepal, Rajpur Fardhuwa:  
A male peer educator is  
holding a discussion for  
adults to learn about issues  
related to child marriage.



### III. THE SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE

In times of adversity, vulnerable children and their families may be exposed to circumstances that threaten their individual and collective survival and sense of well-being. A loss of a job, war, poverty, illness or death of a caregiver, a flood, family separation or other types of crises may overwhelm even the most resilient. These situations can have an enormous impact on children's immediate and long-term development. When support systems people count on unravel, it is important to have coordinated and effective child protection systems including the right number of well-trained and supported workers engaged in the right locations.

The social service workforce is comprised of the variety of workers that contribute to the care, support, promotion of rights and empowerment of vulnerable populations served by the social service system. The social service workforce promotes the healthy development and well-being of children and families and focuses on preventative, responsive, and promotive and rehabilitative services that support families and children in communities by alleviating poverty, reducing discrimination, facilitating access to needed services and promoting social justice.<sup>5</sup>

The social service workforce is dynamic and context-specific. Different countries utilize different definitions and assign different functions to similar titles of workers comprising the social service workforce. Social service workers within government who provide social services to children can be found across many different ministries depending on the country; for example, ministries of social affairs, social development, health and social welfare, justice, youth and sport, etc. The non-government social service workforce often comprises the majority of social service workers in a given country, as located

within non-profit, civil society, faith-based or private sector organizations. These workers may have a range of titles, such as social worker, child protection officer, case manager, community development officer, child and youth care worker, probation officer and can also include supervisors, managers and trainers. Government and non-governmental social service workers may work together to carry out a range of functions at the macro-, mezzo- or micro-levels of the social service system. The balance of roles and functions between government, non-profit, civil society, faith-based or private sector organizations is dependent on context and culture and varies between countries, as highlighted in the information provided below on the eight countries in the South Asia region. In many ways, it is this diversity of workers that makes the workforce strong, when they are acting within a well-coordinated and resourced system.

Allied workers, who are professionals, paraprofessionals and volunteers involved in sectors such as education, health or justice, also have roles related to the care, support, promotion of rights and empowerment of vulnerable populations. For example, family court judges, nurses, teachers or police are all integral to the overall care of children; however, they are aligned with other professions. These roles are differentiated from those such as school counsellors, social workers posted in police stations or child probation officers, who are considered as and identify with the social service workforce. In this report, we reference examples of collaboration between social service workers and allied workers, but we do not feature counts of education programmes, such as law schools, or workers, such as doctors, within the allied workforce.

Maldives: Two children  
from the island of Nilandhu,  
Faafu atoll.



## IV. VISION FOR STRENGTHENING THE SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE

### UNICEF's Strategic Vision to Strengthen the Social Service Workforce in South Asia

In 2018 UNICEF will release its 'Social Service Workforce Strengthening Programme Guidance to Address Violence Against Children (VAC) and Other Child Vulnerabilities'. This guidance recognizes and embraces the growing evidence base that advocates for focused efforts to support the social service workforce, if lasting change for children's protection is to be realized at scale. In realizing the overarching aims through the interconnected workforce strengthening strategies, UNICEF has developed a set of indicators to help track the progress in these efforts in this upcoming paper, 'Programme Guidance: UNICEF Social Service Workforce Strengthening to Address VAC and Other Child Vulnerabilities'. This report references the following indicators:

#### UNICEF Social Service Workforce Output Indicators:

- **Nationwide mapping of Social Service Workforce carried out**
- **Number of social service workers with responsibility for child protection per 100,000 children, according to type (cadre; governmental and non-governmental)**
- **Vacancy rates of government social service workforce positions by cadre**
- **Professional associations recognized by the national government as legitimate and legally approved**
- **Publicly disseminated professional codes of ethics and licensing regulations for each SSW cadre**

Nationwide mapping exercises are essential to carry out in order to fully understand the composition of current workforce and the factors that support the smooth development

and functioning of the workforce. In a workforce mapping, some of the elements to assess include: existing workforce-supportive policies and legislation, availability of different types of education and training, existence and support provided by professional associations, existence of licensing or registration and professional quality standards and worker perceptions of organizational and professional support.

Worker-to-child ratios and vacancy rates help convey a picture of the relative availability of the social service workforce. Lower ratios of worker to child can signal general patterns of high turnover and vacancy rates and low retention of workers. This can result in diminished service provision and outcomes for children and families. Low worker-to-child ratios can also reflect poor planning and budgeting, low prioritization in national plans or strategies, poor distribution of workers, challenges recruiting qualified workers and so on. Unpacking these variables is particularly necessary in setting realistic ratios and vacancy rate targets in a given country.

Professional associations or other recognized organizations can fulfil an important advocacy role and serve as a valuable convener in introducing quality standards to professionalize the social service workforce. The type of professional associations analysed for national workforce mapping exercises are nationally focused and may provide specific services to members including: in-service education, licensing or registration, code of ethics and other quality standards that promote a nationally recognized standard of quality and consistency. Frequently, national associations are linked to international associations, such as the International Federation of Social Workers or the International Association of Schools of Social Work and their regional entities.



Bangladesh, Dewanganj village: Meeting of the Committee for the Prevention of Violence Against Women.

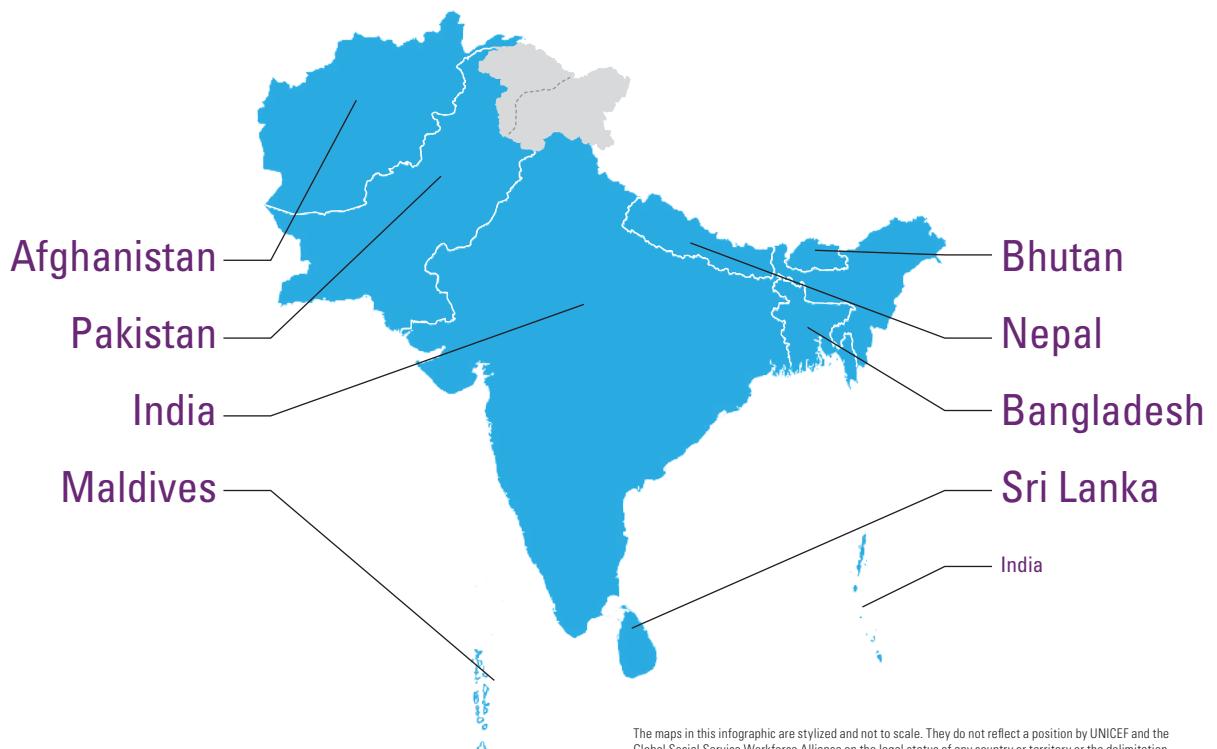
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## V. OVERVIEW OF THE WORKFORCE IN SOUTH ASIA

### A. COUNTRY DATA AT A GLANCE

The country data included in this section offer a thumbnail sketch of the current social service workforce strengthening efforts and brief contexts of each country included in this report. Every country is operating from a different place in developing its workforce and there is no one

universally assured way to best strengthen the workforce. This section is designed to provide an overview of the important country-specific contextual factors as well as regional emerging patterns that may support or inhibit progress in workforce strengthening. A more thorough listing and analysis of these indicators will appear later in the report.



The maps in this infographic are stylized and not to scale. They do not reflect a position by UNICEF and the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. The dotted line between Jammu and Kashmir represents approximately the Line of Control agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the Parties.

# Afghanistan

<b>Contextual Background</b>	<p>Decades of war have eroded many of the community and familial support systems the country once took pride in.<sup>6</sup> The overall social service workforce capacity to carry out policy formulation, planning and fund mobilization remains a challenge and the absence of one comprehensive child protection policy framework prevents planning processes from being strategic. However, the Afghan government is currently finalizing a new Children’s Act and preparations to develop a new National Child Protection Strategy in accordance with the vision of such legislation to redress these challenges.<sup>7</sup> Afghanistan has only 110 government social service workers and relies considerably on the work of NGOs to support the system through coordination that is taking place through CPAN (Child Protection Action Network) and their close relationship with Child Protection Committees (CPCs), communities and children they serve. The government-sponsored ‘Social Work Coaching Project’ has helped train large cohorts of government and NGO social service workers.<sup>8</sup> A child protection system strengthening project (funded by IKEA Foundation) with MoLSAMD in partnership with World Vision International Afghanistan involves three training modules to improve capacity of social workers with special reference to case management. It is built on the already existing material developed by MoLSAMD National Skills Development Programme on National Training Guidelines for Social Work for the Child Protection Certificate developed in 2014 around the same time of this social work coaching project.<sup>9 10</sup></p>
<b>Education Availability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 degree programme reported.</li> <li>• 0 diploma programmes reported.</li> <li>• 1 certificate programme reported but not offered regularly.</li> </ul>
<b>Workforce Composition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 government ministries with reported social service workforce staff.</li> <li>• 110 reported government social service workforce staff.</li> <li>• Ratio of worker per 100,000 child population: 0.62</li> </ul>
<b>Professional Associations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0 Professional Associations reported.</li> </ul>
<b>Key Milestones and Innovative Programmes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed national qualification standards and culturally relevant curriculum through collaboration between Boston College and Hunter College through the National Skills Development Programme (sponsored by MoLSAMD and UNICEF).<sup>11 12</sup></li> <li>• Regional collaboration between Kabul University and Tata Institute of Social Science (TISS) in India promotes social work education and professionalization of the workforce and provides Afghan students scholarships for BSW, MSW and PhD degrees. This collaboration also allowed Kabul University to contextualize the material developed by Boston College and Hunter College by bringing in their strong community-based social work experience into the Afghan context.</li> <li>• Established first BSW degree in Afghanistan with Kabul University with first 20 graduates (almost half female).</li> <li>• CPAN provides an intersectoral and coordinated structure at local to national level for case management and identifies structural issues in the system, in order to then resolve/fix the structural concern in a sustainable manner.</li> </ul>



# Bangladesh

## Contextual Background

In 2014, Bangladesh was declared a lower-middle-income country and has a vision of addressing social and economic disparities to become a middle-income country by 2021.<sup>13</sup> Many children are particularly susceptible to hazardous work conditions, child marriage, separation from family care, conflict with the law and natural disasters.<sup>14 15</sup> A large NGO network has stepped in to offer specific services related to protection (i.e. education for working children, housing for children experiencing domestic abuse and legal assistance, etc.). Different intersectoral committees from the local to the national level have been established to support referral and case management, also recognizing child participation at the most decentralized level of the committees. However, there are challenges in maintaining quality standards and accountability and NGOs are only able to address a few of the overall risks to children.<sup>16</sup>

## Education Availability

- 13 degree programmes reported.
- 0 diploma programmes reported.
- 2 certificate programmes reported.

## Workforce Composition

- 1 government ministry with reported social service workforce staff.
- 3,454 reported government social service workforce staff.
- Ratio of worker per 100,000 child population: 6.07

## Professional Associations

- 0 Professional Associations reported.

## Key Milestones and Innovative Programmes

- Basic Social Service Training and Professional Social Service Training by the Department of Social Services and UNICEF has been institutionalized within National Social Services Academy (NSSA) under the Department of Social Services, Ministry of Social Welfare with a pool of 48 Master Trainers.<sup>17</sup>
- Government has officially recognized the role of social workers in protecting the rights of children at the community level and imposed proactive social work as the core of protection work for children under the Department of Social Services through the enactment of the Children Act 2013.
- Child Welfare Boards are statutory bodies in Bangladesh mandated by the Children Act 2013 to supervise and monitor the work and conditions of the Child Development Centres, Care Homes, as well as to ensure the best interests of the children residing within the jurisdiction of the board. The Act outlines the composition and role of this board at district and upazilla levels.
- Community Based Child Protection Committees are the grass-roots level committees to monitor child rights situation at the community level and report to the Social Workers or Child Help Line 1098 on child rights violations and violence against children. Committee members are community people, teachers, adolescent boys and girls and social workers who liaise with social workers and probation officers and the child welfare board on critical cases.





## Bhutan

<b>Contextual Background</b>	<p>The majority of people live in rural areas (65.5 per cent) but recent urban migration is expected to rapidly increase. Birth registration for children under five years is nearly universal at 99.9 per cent, while child marriage of girls is high at 30.8 per cent.<sup>18</sup> In a 2016 'Study on Violence Against Children in Bhutan', 64 per cent of children aged 13–17 years reported experiencing at least one incident of physical violence in their lifetime and 47 per cent reported experiencing at least one form of emotional violence in their lifetime.<sup>19</sup> The National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) is mandated to coordinate, report and monitor women and children's rights and has implemented several programmes. The National Plan of Action for Child Protection has been developed and being implemented and includes a logical framework and detailed costing of implementing activities.<sup>20</sup></p>
<b>Education Availability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 degree programme reported.</li> <li>• 0 diploma programmes reported.</li> <li>• 1 certificate programme reported.</li> </ul>
<b>Workforce Composition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 government ministries with reported social service workforce staff.</li> <li>• 248 reported government social service workforce staff.</li> <li>• Ratio of worker per 100,000 child population: 94.98</li> </ul>
<b>Professional Associations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 association, the Bhutan Board of Certified Counsellors, with 150 members reported.</li> <li>• A code of ethics is required to be signed by members.</li> </ul>
<b>Key Milestones and Innovative Programmes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Plan of Action for Child Protection developed.</li> <li>• Code of ethics for protection, probation and social welfare officers developed.</li> <li>• NCWC is developing a strategy to identify key performance indicators, job descriptions and performance standards for social service staff at all levels and an organizational restructuring plan to improve performance. The Commission is also proposing the creation of protection officers with the Royal Civil Service Commission.</li> <li>• Enactment of the Child Care and Protection Act and Domestic Violence Prevention Act, which mandates the creation of social service workforce categories to implement services for women and children in difficult circumstances including children in conflict with the law.</li> <li>• Development of Bachelors of Arts in Social Work programme by the Samtse College of Education, Royal University of Bhutan to be initiated in 2019.</li> <li>• The Royal University of Bhutan is in the process of institutionalizing a Social Policy short course for parliamentarians, decision makers and relevant agencies across the country.</li> </ul>



# India

## Contextual Background

India is one of the fastest-growing economies of the world, which in part has triggered rapid urban migration. The present urban population of India is close to 285 million and preventive social services are scarce, with a high prevalence of abuse and neglect.<sup>21</sup> The complex social, economic, gender, cultural and political factors of life in India are preserved in caste, class, tribal and religious systems. These social constructs often enable or reinforce risk factors present in children's lives through disparate living conditions and poverty. The social service workforce has at times struggled to consistently understand or engage the diverse social dynamics that influence risks for children. There is an increased focus on the service and manufacturing sectors in a largely unregulated workforce, which has created a great demand for business management skills. These labour demands have had an influence on social work education programmes in India.<sup>22</sup>

## Education Availability

- 439 degree programmes reported.
- 17 diploma programmes reported.
- 20 certificate programmes reported.

## Workforce Composition

*\* Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and West Bengal only*

- 6 government ministries with reported social service workforce staff.
- 10,841\* reported government social service workforce staff.
- Ratio of worker per 100,000 child population: Chhattisgarh: 1.42; Rajasthan: 14.81; West Bengal: 0.34<sup>23</sup>

## Professional Associations

- 7 associations reported with an unreported number of members.
- All associations report that a code of ethics is required to be signed by members.

## Key Milestones and Innovative Programmes

- The role of social work professionals is mentioned in the 2015 Juvenile Justice (care and protection of children) Act, which guides the statutory provisions of workforce. This Act is implemented through the government's Child Protection Services Scheme and provides the budget and structure for the workforce.<sup>24</sup>
- Inclusion of social workers in judicial and quasi-judicial bodies such as: Juvenile Justice Board, Child Welfare Committee, State Commission on the Protection of Child Rights.
- ICPS Scheme and recent socio-legal legislations mandate appointment of professional social workers.
- NAPSWI (National Association of Professional Social Workers of India) in 2007 drafted the Bill on the National Council of Professional Social Work in India, which is now pending in the Upper House of Parliament.
- UGC (University Grants Commission), ICSSR (India Council on Social Science Research), ICMR (India Council of Medical Research), NHRC (National Human Rights Council) and central and state government provide support to the professional bodies/institutions to organize workshops/meetings to strengthen the human resources engaged in delivering social services.



## Maldives

<b>Contextual Background</b>	<p>The child protection system relies almost exclusively on centrally controlled state institutions and resources, which has largely kept civil society on the periphery of any meaningful level of involvement. There is very little formal coordination in the child protection system, particularly in the remote, smaller atolls, which are expensive to visit. Violence against children exists in the home, schools and communities. A 2009 study indicated that 28 per cent of boys and 19 per cent of girls under age 18 have experienced emotional or physical punishment at some point in their lives.<sup>25</sup> Nationally, 15 per cent of children attending secondary school reported that they had been sexually abused at least once.<sup>26</sup> Other risk factors for children include: drugs, organized crime and alarming levels of neglect and lack of familial or other psychosocial support services on smaller atolls with high employment migration. Government child protection capacities have improved; however, budgetary shortfalls hamper systematic improvements.<sup>27</sup></p>
<b>Education Availability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 degree programmes reported.</li> <li>• 7 diploma programmes reported.</li> <li>• 9 certificate programmes reported.</li> </ul>
<b>Workforce Composition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 government ministries with reported social service workforce staff.</li> <li>• 914 reported government social service workforce staff.</li> <li>• Ratio of worker per 100,000 child population: 781.2</li> </ul>
<b>Professional Associations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 reported association with 169 members.</li> <li>• 1 association reports that a code of ethics is required to be signed by members.</li> </ul>
<b>Key Milestones and Innovative Programmes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ministry of Gender and Family in association with UNICEF has conducted several in-house refresher courses on important laws and regulations as well as new procedures for 95 social workers based in the 18 Family and Children Service Centres in the 18 atolls and in the ministry in Malé, according to administrative data from the Ministry of Gender and Family.</li> <li>• Action Plan for Prevention and Responding to Violence Against Children drafted.</li> <li>• Action Plan for Prevention of Juvenile Crimes drafted.</li> <li>• Action Plan for strengthening the Juvenile Justice System outlines direction and priority areas for the next two years drafted.</li> <li>• In 2017 UNICEF supported the development of the 'Guidelines for Child Care Homes in Maldives'. These guidelines have not been formally approved; however, two institutions under the Ministry of Gender and Family have started utilizing this reference in the centres.<sup>28</sup></li> <li>• Foster Care Regulations and State Care Regulations have been reviewed and approved by both the Family Court and the Attorney General's Office but they have not been enacted through the needed gazetting process.<sup>29</sup></li> <li>• The Bill on Child Rights, Child Care and Protection and the Bill on Juvenile Justice was drafted with support from UNICEF and is at the Attorney General's Office for submission to Parliament.</li> </ul>



# Nepal

## Contextual Background

Nepal's child protection system has been assembled over decades. Nepal was one of the first signatories to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and enacted the 1992 Children's Act. The system infrastructure is intact but the development and many elements are not synchronized and working in unison. Children's access to justice remains limited and has not been adequately addressed in existing laws and rules.<sup>30</sup> The absence of a dedicated front-line social service workforce limits systematic case management. Most child protection services are provided by local and international NGOs, UN and other multilateral/bilateral agencies. These entities act on a wide range of issue-based prevention and response programmes and services, which vary in quality and lack state accountability.<sup>31</sup>

## Education Availability

- 18 degree programmes reported.
- 3 diploma programmes reported.
- 0 certificate programmes reported.

## Workforce Composition

- 3 government ministries with reported social service workforce staff.
- 670 reported government social service workforce staff.
- Ratio of worker per 100,000 child population: 5.99

## Professional Associations

- 1 association reported 40 members.
- 1 association reported a code of ethics is required to be signed by members.

## Key Milestones and Innovative Programmes

- The Department of Women and Children created 75 posts in 75 districts (22 child protection officers and 53 child protection inspectors) that will provide child protection services.
- The Department of Women and Children, through UNICEF's technical assistance, carried out capacity needs assessment of its social service workforce. Based on the capacity needs assessment, a training module on addressing gender-based violence and child protection has been developed. The training module is currently being piloted and considered for scaling up for the department's in-service training programme.
- The 2015 earthquake response fostered increased coordination between the Ministry and the transport sector to curb the illicit movement of children.



*Nepal, Madrasa Imadul Ghoraba: After Friday's prayer, Imam speaks to students and villagers about child marriage.*

# Pakistan

## Contextual Background

The process of devolution has significantly altered the political, programmatic, policy and service context of child protection and the 18th amendment (2010) gave child protection legislative and administrative authority to the provinces.<sup>32</sup> In Pakistan there is no mandated system of reporting child abuse cases.<sup>33</sup> Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan have successfully completed a legislative review and will work on piloting a child protection case management and referral system through a comprehensive implementation plan as set out in the Child Protection Act 2016.<sup>34</sup> Punjab leads the rest of the country on birth registration, with 77 per cent of children under age five registered.<sup>35</sup> The Sindh Provincial Children's Act is a fairly comprehensive procedural child protection law; however, it is not being executed fully.<sup>36</sup>

## Education Availability

- 92 degree programmes reported.
- 5 diploma programmes reported.
- 4 certificate programmes reported.

## Workforce Composition

\* Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa only

- 4 government ministries with reported social service workforce staff.
- 717 reported government social service workforce staff.
- Ratio of worker per 100,000 child population: Ranges from 0.64 to 1.33 per province.

## Professional Associations

- 0 Professional Associations reported.

## Key Milestones and Innovative Programmes

- In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa the Department of Health is scaling up a 5-Year Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Strategy. One pillar of the strategy is focused on policy and institutional development of the social service workforce for the delivery of needed services at the community level. Proposed interventions include pre-service and in-service trainings and supervision. The Department of Psychology, University of Peshawar will also update the curricula with the latest best practices in delivering quality services to children and caregivers.
- Punjab's draft social welfare policy has been prepared through a wider stakeholder consultation process.
- The Sindh Social Welfare Department has regularly provided in-service trainings and refresher courses to their social welfare officers/social workforce to enhance their capacity over the past four decades.
- The scale-up of a pilot project is under way in Sindh and Punjab Provinces for birth registration through mobile phones, introduced by UNICEF in partnership with the Departments of Local Government and Health, the National Data Base Registration Authority (NADRA) and the mobile telecom network operator Telenor.<sup>37</sup>
- Punjab, Sindh, Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governments have begun working with UNICEF to deliver a household-based child labour survey guided by an internationally recognized methodology of 'Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour' (SIMPOC). Capacity-building efforts have begun with provincial Labour and Human Resource Departments and Bureaus of Statistics to deliver future periodic child labour surveys. Comprehensive data will be available in 2019 and evidence-based policy formulation at the provincial level will follow.<sup>38</sup>
- UNICEF Pakistan Country Programme 2018–2022 has included the provision of technical and financial support to provincial and territorial governments to establish a public, coordinated Child Protection Case Management and Referral System as one of the main components. Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan have already initiated work in this regard, while Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will follow in 2019.
- As an integral component of the larger CO case management system, Pakistan is also planning to establish a Child Protection Information Management System over the next two years with a capacity-building of relevant officials on roles and responsibilities, as well as training of social service workforce, slated for 2020–2022.<sup>39</sup>



## Sri Lanka

### Contextual Background

Children born during the 30 years of civil war that ended in 2009 experienced significant war-related atrocities. As lives stabilize after the conflict, children in Sri Lanka remain at risk of violence and exploitation. Corporal punishment in schools is common and considered the norm<sup>40</sup> and sexual violence among boys and girls is considered prevalent, with 27.2 per cent of ever-partnered Sri Lankan men aged 18 to 49 reporting having experienced some form of sexual abuse as a child.<sup>41</sup> Following the enactment of the 13th amendment to the Constitution in Sri Lanka in 1987, some of the services related to child protection have been devolved to the provinces forming a dual administrative system, and there is no overarching inter-ministerial mechanism to coordinate child protection activities. Probation officers (POs) are considered to have a high level of experience and ability, while other child protection-related officers are not as experienced. There is no child protection central data base or integrated management information system to offer analysis and trends. The Village Child Development Committees and Community Based Rehabilitation Volunteers are structurally integrated into the system but face resource challenges in maintaining consistent connections with the social service system.<sup>42</sup>

### Education Availability

- 14 degree programmes reported.
- 8 diploma programmes reported.
- 3 certificate programmes reported.

### Workforce Composition

- 4 Government ministries with reported social service workforce staff.
- 31,750 reported government social service workforce staff.
- Ratio of worker per 100,000 child population: 527.41

### Professional Associations

- 1 reported association with 80 members.
- It is unclear if a code of ethics is required to be signed by members.

### Key Milestones and Innovative Programmes

- The establishment of National Institute of Social Development (NISD) BA and MA social work degree programmes have produced 1,500 graduates over the last 10 years.
- UNICEF has supported NISD with designing and developing curricula for the Diploma on Child Protection, resulting in continued in-service training.
- Sri Lanka is a Pathfinder country as a member of the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children and as such has developed a road map for two-year and five-year goals to address violence against children.
- UNICEF will carry out an in-depth assessment of Sri Lanka's social service workforce in 2018. Line ministries working in child protection will be able to see where the personnel gaps and duplications exist and more efficiently plan and budget their human resource needs.



## B. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Establishing a dynamic and reflective education and training infrastructure for the social service workforce is a fundamental aspect of a child protection system that is responsive to children's holistic needs. The South Asia region has seen some inspiring advances in educational opportunities for the social service workforce. At the same time, education and training institutions face a variety of challenges. Much of the evolution of education and training is driven by the diverse cultural, political and socio-economic histories in the countries of this region and the unique needs workers face in responding to the array of service necessities in communities they serve.

In this section, we will track some of these developmental currents and potential implications of supporting worker educational and professional development trajectories. We will explore three different types of educational programmes, which provide the social service workforce with a capacity-building foundation, including degree, diploma and certificate programmes. These different types of educational programmes target a diverse audience working in a wide range of roles and contexts, with divergent learning needs.

### Degree Programmes

In order to develop a highly functioning, credible and sustainable quality workforce, national degree programmes that are informed by local context and knowledge are essential. Degree programmes deliver professional-level technical competencies through theoretical course work and ideally some form of an experiential field-based practicum where students can apply and test these concepts in a real-life context. These programmes typically include a bachelor's degree (2–5 years), a master's degree (1–2 years) and occasionally a PhD programme.



Bangladesh, Jamalpur  
Police: Rokshana works  
at the police help  
desk and supports  
the counselling of  
young women.

© UNICEF/South Asia 2016/Bronstein

### Box 1

*“While undertaking my field placements for my Master’s in Social Work degree, I experienced predominantly charity oriented social work in the voluntary sector and a ‘western’ inspired [generic] social work practice in the public sector, with little relevance to the local realities of Pakistan.”*

These gaps in Pakistani social services inspired Tahira Jabeen to apply her Master’s in Public Policy and a PhD in Child Protection Policy in Australia to improve social work, child protection and the social services system in Pakistan. In 2015, Tahira was invited by the Public Service Commission to sit on the panel for the selection of social welfare officers, medical social officers and assistant directors of social welfare for the Department of Social Welfare.

*“This opportunity enhanced my understanding of the requirements of the social services workforce and the gaps between their university education and training and field practice,” she recalls.*

As a result, she has spent her career conducting research on social issues to better inform and strengthen education and influence public policy for better social services in Pakistan.

– Tahira Jabeen, Assistant Professor  
in the Department of Social Work  
at the University of the Punjab in  
Lahore, Pakistan

### Number and Type of Degree Programmes

Questionnaire respondents were asked to contribute information on all degrees relevant to the social service workforce. This produced a range of different types of degrees, with a majority being social work and others including sociology, developmental studies, psychology, community development, counselling, child development and juvenile justice. Because of the numbers of each type of degree submitted, Table 1 below categorizes these degrees into “social work” and “other”. All but one country reported at least one established degree programme; Bhutan is planning to introduce a Bachelor’s of

Table 1: Number of Degrees by Type and Country

Country	Bachelor's Social Work	Bachelor's Other	Master's Social Work	Master's Other	PhD Social Work	PhD Other	Country Total
Afghanistan	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Bangladesh	4	1	7	0	1	0	13
Bhutan	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
India	144	3	270	15	6	1	439
Maldives	1	3	0	1	0	0	5
Nepal	6	4	4	4	0	0	18
Pakistan	20	14	36	12	7	3	92
Sri Lanka	2	4	1	7	0	0	14
<b>Degree Total</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>583</b>

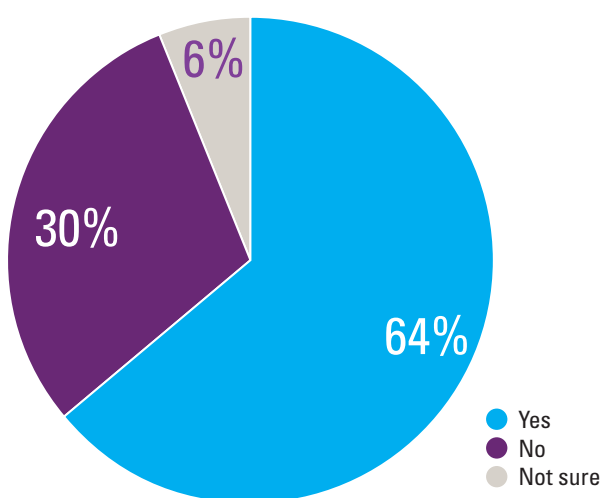
Social Work programme in 2019. All countries but Afghanistan (which has an MSW programme but is not currently available) currently provide relevant master's degrees, and three countries offer relevant PhD programmes. India offers by far the most degrees, accounting for 75 per cent of the total degrees reported in the region. Of all degree programmes listed below, 64 per cent require a field placement or practicum for students.

### Historical context of social work degree programmes in South Asia

Of all degrees relevant to the social service workforce, social work degree programmes are the majority of programmes offered, and this section will therefore focus on that specific type of degree. Social work degree programmes are growing in the region, as the steady rise of degree programmes in Table 3 indicates. Some, like Joseph Kwok, former Honourable Secretary of the Asia and Pacific Association for Social Work Education (APASWE), point to the recent expansion in numbers of universities joining APASWE as members and believe that there should be a sense of hopefulness that social service workers are answering to difficult tasks with, "...a stronger sense of mission, clearer professional roles, more effective development strategies, enhanced solidarity and a renewed commitment..."<sup>43</sup>

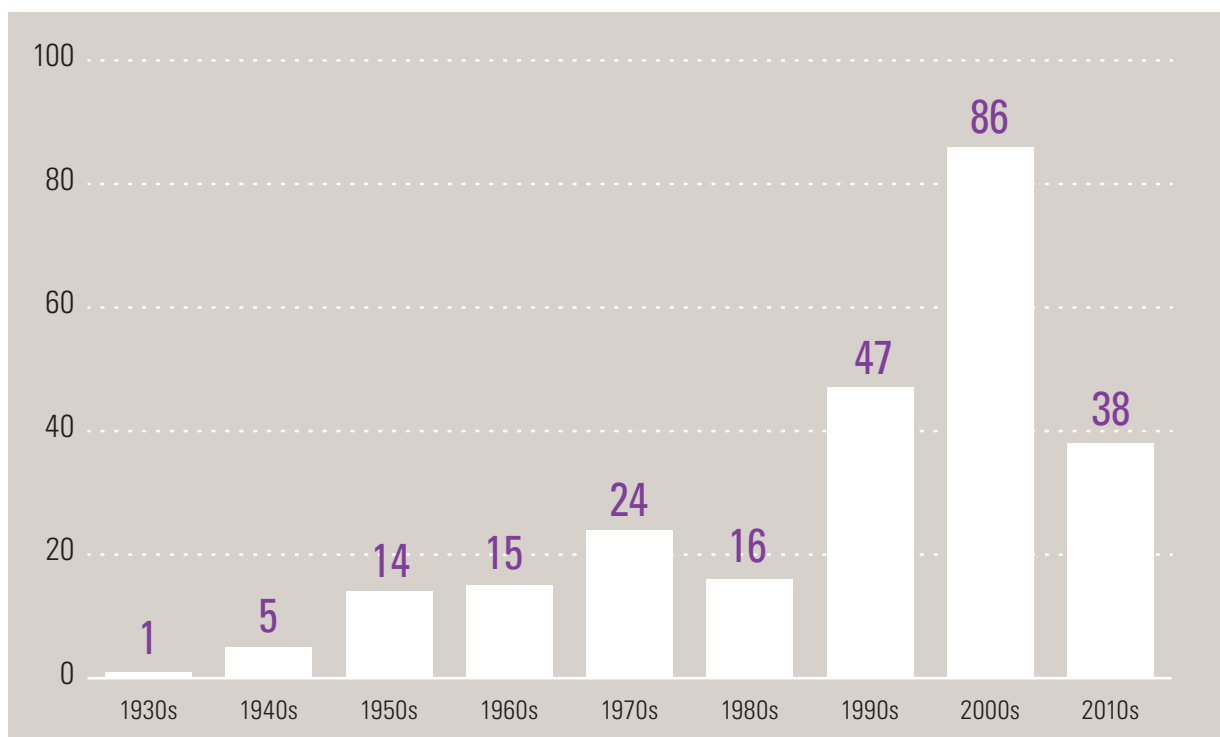
Social work research historians contend that in South Asia, social work training was initially exported from Western countries, most notably the United States of America.<sup>44</sup> Social work was first introduced in India in the 1930s–1940s. Later, social work was then imported to Bangladesh, Pakistan<sup>45</sup> and Sri Lanka in the 1950s with a pressing need to improve availability of human resources, in part based on advice from the United Nations and other global organizations.<sup>46</sup> Eventually, social work found its way to Nepal in 1996. The establishment of social service workforce degree programmes

Table 2: Percentage of Degree Programmes that Require a Field Placement (Based on Available Information)





**Table 3: Number of SSW Degree Programmes Established by Decade in South Asia**



over time across the eight countries in the region is featured in Table 3. This chart is based on the available data collected from questionnaires, reports and a desk review and represents only a sampling of the total social service workforce degree programmes in these eight countries.

The increase in social work programmes played an important role in the social development and reconstruction process that followed war and natural disasters in these areas.<sup>47</sup> However, many continue to criticize the oversized influence Western-based curricula and approaches have had throughout the region during these formative years. At the same time, some maintain that this also served as a catalyst for some universities to adapt curriculum and reference materials, as many Western-based ideologies were written in English and not understood by many in the region. This process invited a more linguistic, cultural and contextual development of materials that are likely to be more useful to social service workers responding to the varied needs of indigenous populations.<sup>48</sup> Many in the region and around the world criticize that the continued passive reliance on easily replicable Western-based knowledge and curricula has served as a form of neo-colonialism undermining local culture, knowledge and practices.

There has been progress in regional efforts towards ‘indigenization’ or transcribing and

### Box 2

Following an initial expression of interest on the part of the Royal University of Bhutan and UNICEF in 2016, an elaborate consultative process was set in motion to identify the need and viability of the social work programme, including through the engagement with the Royal Civil Service Commission, that is mandated with all professional government recruitments. As an outcome, towards the end of 2017, two programmes (a) a four-year BA programme starting 2019 and (b) a 6-month certificate programme starting January 2018 were launched. The programme will include a field immersion programme and social innovation project.

*“There is a rich repository of knowledge on social work in Bhutan that merits research and dissemination to support contemporary approaches to social work.”*

– Nidup Dorji, Vice Chancellor, Royal University of Bhutan

*“The programme will produce the next generation of social work professionals. There is a lot of excitement about this programme.”*

– Dorji Thinley, President, Samtse College of Education, Royal University of Bhutan

applying knowledge and skills in a transformational modified format that embraces local culture, values and knowledge and moves beyond mere translated imitation.<sup>49</sup> For example, in Nepal, the social work programme of Mid-Western University offers 'Rights of indigenous and marginalized communities' as a subject of study for students specializing in rights-based approaches in social work practice. Similarly, a course on 'Indigenous community organization practices in Nepal and its historical development' is also offered across different areas of study. These contextualized innovations can provide important insights into understanding local challenges and potential ways forward across a range of fields of study (i.e. psychology, sociology, anthropology, criminal justice, health and social work). One popular construct utilized in Afghanistan blends local knowledge and wisdom with Western methods and standards.<sup>50</sup> Kabul University and Hunter College School of Social Work developed new national qualification standards and university-level curricula (BA and MA programmes) using an ethnographic, participatory research process called DACUM (Develop-A-Curriculum). This process incorporated local knowledge and definitions of social work in a contextual framing of global evidence-based social service methods.<sup>51</sup> Later, TISS in India supported Kabul University to contextualize the material developed by Boston College and Hunter College by bringing their strong community-based social work experience into the Afghan context.

### Degree Programme Implications – the Sporadic Pace and Hidden Costs

While degree programmes continue to grow across the region, this growth rate has not taken off at the same pace for all countries. Some countries in the region, like Afghanistan, Bhutan and the Maldives have low numbers (1, 1 and 5 respectively) of education programmes. A recent report found that only 6 per cent of social service workers in Afghanistan had graduated from a university social work programme because of the lack of availability of such training programmes.<sup>52</sup> These countries are faced with limited resources to support investments in specialized university programmes. This struggle resonates with social work practitioners in these countries as well who feel unappreciated and feel the need to continually advocate for a legitimate

identity and value for the challenging work they do as a profession.<sup>53</sup>

#### Box 3

Gowry Vasudevan has 19 years' experience in social work teaching, training and research. She is currently the Director of Training at the National Institute of Social Development, Ministry of Social Empowerment, Welfare and Kandyan Heritage, Sri Lanka.

*"I support the officers who work with children and families. I believe outcome-based training will enhance knowledge, skills, attitudes and the mindset of workers to serve in a professional manner. Workers in social work child welfare should be trained."*

She has coordinated the diploma in child protection training programmes for child welfare officers in Jaffna, a northern province of the country. The programme developed new strategic engagement designs in planning and policy making in post-conflict Sri Lanka setting. Trainees in the programme were initially sceptical of the need for such a course, but then began to see the impact and value of the training. All facilitators have master's degrees in social work and have experience in designing context-specific methodologies and best practices that engage local stakeholders in collective action in child welfare. Communities value these efforts and have begun to increase the demand for these services. A community working towards collective, tangible results for their children incrementally changes opinions of social work and social workers. In time these perceptions may take hold across all of Sri Lanka.

There has been an exponential rise in the numbers of degree programmes in India. Most of these institutions have National Assessment and Accreditation Council certification with the bulk of growth taking place at the post-graduate level. While many factors may be contributing to this phenomenon, some have ascribed this rise to commercialization of

education.<sup>54</sup> This market influence may have led some institutions to shift traditional social work streams towards specializations that embrace more commercialized personnel management in demand by some employers from urban centres.<sup>55</sup> Many of these new academic institutions are self-financed, entailing expensive fees from students. This has also sparked a number of on-line distance degree programmes. A number of these programmes have a field placement requirement, but some critics maintain that the level and quality of supervision in some of these institutions is often lacking, particularly for online programmes where there is no supervised fieldwork.<sup>56</sup>

Many country governments do not require social service-related degrees as a prerequisite in recruitment efforts, allowing candidates with other unrelated degrees (i.e. engineering, biology, etc.) to fill jobs that rely on social work technical knowledge and experience.<sup>57</sup> The results of this unspecialized degree requirement mean that decisions about policy, programme operations and staffing are sometimes made by people who do not have the necessary technical background.

Only three countries reported a social work PhD programme (7 in Pakistan, 6 in India and 1 in Bangladesh), which severely impacts a country's ability to adequately train future master's-level social work students and subsequently future bachelor's-level students within the country. A young social work educator from Nepal who now pursues doctoral work in Australia reflects:

*"...we do not have people who have doctoral qualifications who are able to guide research and offer sound master's degree programmes."<sup>58</sup>*

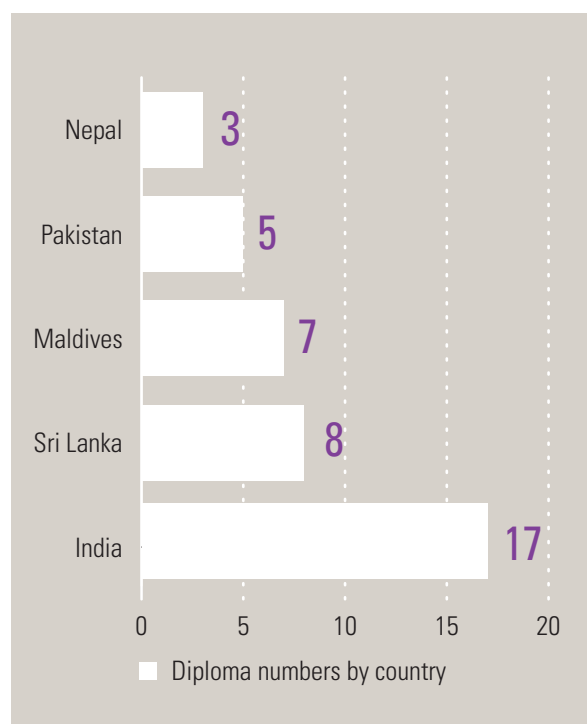
Additionally, this lack of locally trained PhD expertise makes it very difficult to ensure that the development of social work degree curricula and evidence-based research will be driven and informed by local knowledge, culture, world views, social norms, values and the unique contextual needs. Essentially, this further entrenches social work curricula to follow the global trend of relying on Western-based models, instead of establishing culturally grounded and relevant curricula and research. This may also further reinforce a broader misalignment and disconnection of the social service system

holistically and lead to poorly framed and targeted legislation, policies, finances, programmes, data collection and human resources. The lingering results may be a social service workforce that is unable to provide a responsive level of needed support services to children and their families.

## DIPLOMA PROGRAMMES

In this report, we define diploma programmes as educational programmes that are generally shorter than degree programmes, which can be offered as a post-secondary school course and often substituted for a degree. Diplomas typically require six months to two years to complete. They may be offered in the same universities as degree programmes or in other accredited institutions, such as training centres and vocational schools. Questionnaire respondents were asked to list all diploma programmes relevant to the social service workforce. A total of five countries reported current existing diploma programmes through various institutions, while Bhutan plans to offer two separate diploma programmes in 2018 and Nepal plans to offer one diploma programme in community development and planning with no proposed starting time frame. As indicated in Table 4 below, India led the way in the total number of diplomas listed (17) followed by Sri Lanka and the Maldives.<sup>59</sup>

**Table 4: Diploma Numbers by Country**



A total of 40 diploma programmes on a number of topics were identified, including psychology (17), counselling (7), social work (5), child protection (3) and other topics including: elderly care, women's empowerment, NGO management and human resource development and labour welfare. The length of study for diploma programmes ranged from 4 months to 24 months and some of the diploma programmes listed did not record the length of study. The most common length of study offered is for 12 months, 11 per cent are for 4 months and 9 per cent are for 24 months.<sup>60</sup>

## Certificate Programmes

In this report, we define certificate programmes as those programmes that are certified or recognized by an official body and are generally training courses requiring less time than a diploma. These programmes serve as an important component in the social service educational system because they help ensure access to short-term, often in-service, global, national or provincially recognized courses that provide content on context-driven theory and practice. Additionally, a larger number of participants are often able to attend and receive important training at a fraction of the cost and time.

Many certificate participants work full time and attend training on a part-time basis over a period of several months. This incremental, flexible time frame allows participants a number of benefits, including the ability to continue to be employed while they update their skills and knowledge on the latest evidence-based practices and theories. When properly facilitated, these courses provide collective opportunities to identify challenges and solutions through collaborative learning. The relationships formed in these group-learning settings may bring people together across organizational boundaries and increase cohesion within child protection systems. This incremental approach to learning is also very useful in providing participants with the time and space needed to deconstruct complicated theory and practices and apply this learning in a meaningful way to their full-time jobs. This applied process can become a dynamic experiential learning process, which increases learning retention, improves content utilization

and can potentially lead to innovation and reform of the social service workforce system.

Seven countries reported a total of 40 certificate programmes with a breakdown that included: 11 in social work and child protection, 7 in psychology, 4 in monitoring and evaluation/research methods, and 18 designated here as "other" programme focuses. These 18 other programmes consisted of diverse areas of focus including: child studies, geriatric care, applied sociology, human rights, women's studies, early child development and care, police recruitment training course and community development practice. Nearly all the programmes lasted more than one week with most at least one month and spread out over six months. Some of these programmes were designed as an introduction to basic concepts and practices, while other advanced programmes required prerequisite knowledge, skills, experience and/or coursework. Many of the programmes also identified a target audience, which may help participants more readily identify a shared, familiar context and application as it relates to their full-time job. Some of these targeted groups include: parliamentarians and government policy workers, law enforcement officers, social and para-social workers, educators, NGOs, etc. Records on certificate programmes and graduation numbers were difficult to verify, which makes it challenging to compare the number of graduates of certificate programmes with the number of graduates from diploma and degree programmes.

### Box 4

Seven countries reported certificate programmes, with a total of 40 programmes in the region ranging from one week to twelve months.

## C. GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL WORKFORCE

In this section, the report will investigate the government and non-governmental social service workforce and their respective roles, employers and numbers to deliver responsive social services to those most in need. The report will also touch on how this dynamic relationship may have shifted or evolved over time.

## Government Workforce

Governments hold the primary responsibility for ensuring that high-quality social services are delivered by a strong social service workforce. In carrying out this responsibility, they need to coordinate with a number of national actors to articulate and implement a common strategy for systematic workforce reform as well as ensure that policies and legislation are in place to support the strategy. This section highlights features of the government social service workforce in eight countries in South Asia and explores how governments have responded to this challenge and the implications for future improvement efforts in quality.

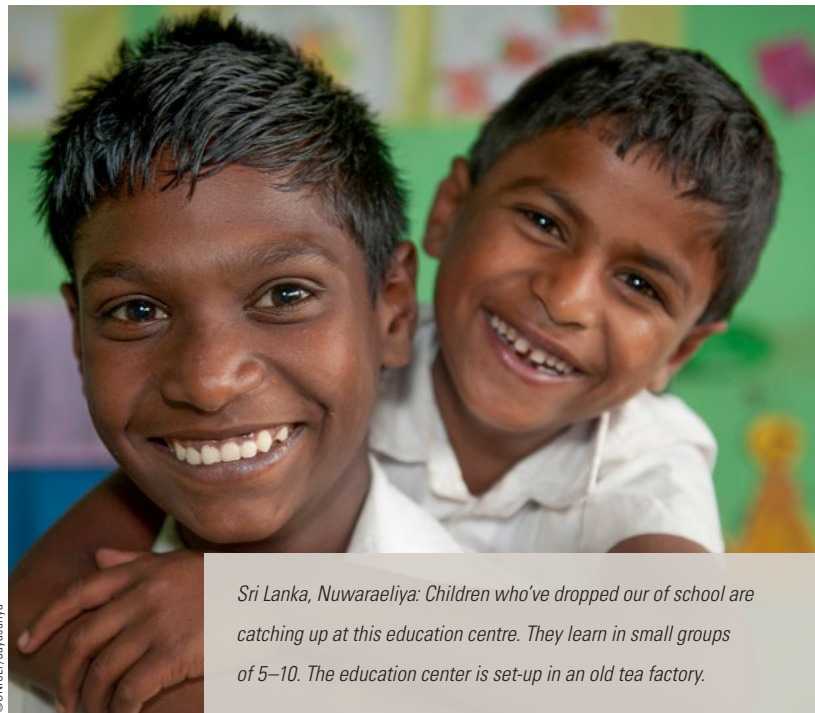
It is important to note the significant contributions that workers allied to the social service workforce provide in the protection and care of children. Allied workers, who are professionals, paraprofessionals and volunteers involved in sectors such as education, health or justice, also contribute to the care, support, promotion of rights and empowerment of children and families. While an integral part of the overall care of children, they are aligned with other professions. Within this report, we may reference examples of cross-sectoral collaboration related to planning, developing and supporting the social service workforce, but we do not feature data about the allied workforce.

### Mapping Government Social Service Workforces and Evidence-based Decision-making

The UNICEF 'Social Service Workforce Strengthening Programme Guidance' includes the output indicator:

- **Nationwide mapping of SSW regularly carried out.**

Data collection is an important step in coordinating and operationalizing a country's social service system. A government that has timely, reliable and adequate data on their social service workforce is equipped with a powerful tool to make informed and responsive decisions regarding workforce planning, training, support and budgeting, even when faced with resource constraints. A lack of baseline and periodic data and an uninformed analysis process will limit the responsiveness and impact of effective decision-making.



@UNICEF\_Jayasuriya

*Sri Lanka, Nuwaraeliya: Children who've dropped out of school are catching up at this education centre. They learn in small groups of 5–10. The education center is set-up in an old tea factory.*

Government-led child protection country mapping exercises supported by UNICEF took place from 2012 to 2017 in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan (five provinces) and Sri Lanka. These reports sought to provide detail on the structure and composition of the government social service workforce and descriptive narratives on other important details of the country's child protection system. These reports often engage a range of perspectives and data from key stakeholders who support the national social service workforce and system including: government, local and international NGOs, community and religious leaders, etc. This report draws from the mapping reports and pairs the data with recently completed survey responses from UNICEF country office staff and partners. This section of the report includes this combined data and features social service workforce human resource staffing titles and numbers at the national, district and local levels for this report. Given the wide variance and difficulty in tracking current data in decentralized social service systems within India, data were gathered for only three states and is not a national total.

While data were not always available for every country, Table 5 and Table 6 below highlight more in-depth details that were available from the Maldives and Nepal. These two tables may serve as a useful reference and guide for other countries and in future planning and systematic reform.

Table 5: Maldives: Key Ministries, Functions, Roles, SSW Positions and Numbers<sup>61 62</sup>

Ministry	Department	Social welfare service mandate
<b>Ministry of Gender and Family</b>	Social Service Department (FCSC-Family and Child Service Centre)	FCSCs have been established in 19 atolls to deliver social protection services at the atoll level. The primary purpose of these establishments is to provide protection and safety to groups including women, children, elderly and persons with disabilities. <sup>63</sup>
	Family Protection Authority (Referral and Monitoring Department)	The role as defined by the Domestic Violence Prevention Act: public awareness on domestic violence; deliver services to victims of domestic violence; coordinate the work of appropriate government institutions including the police and the health sector; manage local efforts to protect victims of domestic violence under a national policy; and take a leading role in fulfilling a reduction of violence at scale nationally. <sup>64</sup>
<b>Maldives Police Service</b>	Victim Support Unit	Revise system of case allocation so that every case involving a minor (victim or suspect) is handled by an officer with the SJPO training or equivalent.
	Family and Child Protection Department	Apply formal investigations for (child) victims of violence, victims of gender-based violence (GBV) and children who commit serious offences, referrals for non-serious offences.
	Divisions Operations Command	Apply diversion and delayed prosecution to children who commit non-serious offences.
<b>Prosecutor General's Office</b>	Victim Support Unit	Establish guidelines on exercising prosecutorial discretion in juvenile cases.
<b>Ministry of Home Affairs</b>	Juvenile Justice Unit	Juvenile crime prevention and working with juvenile offenders in their rehabilitation and reintegration back into the community.
<b>Ministry of Education</b>		Define a National Child Protection Policy with prevention and response protocols and establish a human resource plan for child protection. Integrate education professionals in community-based child protection structures.

SSW Position	Number of Staff in Post	Function and roles
Deputy Director General	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide social security services;</li> <li>• Provide prevention and response services for domestic violence, gender-based violence and violence against children;</li> <li>• Provide prevention and response to violence against persons with disabilities, and elderly;</li> <li>• Raise awareness on violence against children;</li> <li>• Care for children placed at the state care institutions.</li> </ul>
Director	3	
Assistant Director	0	
Manager	4	
Sr. Social Service Officer	10	
Social Service Officer	18	
Assistant Social Service Worker	38	
Senior Counsellor	6	
Counsellor	12	
Assistant Counsellor	1	
Admin. Officer	20	
Social Service Officers	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an action plan based on international conventions including the Convention on the Rights of the Child;</li> <li>• Ensure that national development plans and strategies are implemented and are in accordance with ratified international conventions;</li> <li>• Research and data collection;</li> <li>• Examine legislation related to family and child protection;</li> <li>• Coordinate with law enforcement and health services;</li> <li>• Develop policies, standards, procedures and guidelines for services;</li> <li>• Monitor, evaluate and inspect social service provisions;</li> <li>• Establish standards and mechanisms for delivering decentralized social services.</li> </ul>
Victim Support Officer	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure appearance of alleged perpetrators for judicial proceedings.</li> </ul>
Investigating Officers	21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempt to resolve cases;</li> <li>• Attend fully to victims' needs – material, financial, emotional and social.</li> </ul>
Investigating Officers/Victim Support Officers/Community Engagement Officers	278	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempt to resolve cases;</li> <li>• Prevent re-offending by reintegrating offenders into the community;</li> <li>• Enable offenders to assume active responsibility for their actions;</li> <li>• Recreate a working community that supports the rehabilitation of offenders; and victims and is active in preventing crime;</li> <li>• Provide a means of avoiding escalation of legal justice costs and delays.</li> </ul>
Assistant Director General	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing information to victims and witnesses (regarding court procedures, court outcomes, victim rights and responsibilities);</li> <li>• Acting as a key point of liaison and communication between prosecutors and victims (i.e. attend meetings, assist in the communication of legal decisions made by the PG Office, assist victims/witnesses to represent their needs, questions and concerns);</li> <li>• Attending 'proofing', pre-trial and post-trial meetings between the PG office, victims and witnesses;</li> <li>• Providing court familiarization and preparing victims and witnesses for court hearings;</li> <li>• Liaising with external agencies;</li> <li>• Providing skill-building training to PGO staff, external agencies, other professionals;</li> <li>• Providing technical support to prosecutors in handling juvenile offenders cases.</li> </ul>
Deputy Director	1	
Victim Support Officer	1	
Executive Director	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevent re-offending by providing training programme;</li> <li>• Run juvenile crime prevention programmes targeting at-risk children and families;</li> <li>• Deliver life skills and other educational programmes for juvenile offenders and children at risk.</li> </ul>
Senior Social Service Officers	2	
Social Service Officer	6	
Director	2	
Assistant Director	2	
Senior Legal Officer	0	
Juvenile Probation Officer	0	
Training Officer	1	
School Liaison Officers	430	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train teachers, principals and education professionals to (a) detect signs of child protection concerns, and (b) determine action to take as per the child protection policy.</li> </ul>
School Counsellors	54	

Table 6: Nepal: Key Ministries, Functions, Roles, SSW Positions and Numbers<sup>65</sup>

Ministry	Department	Social Welfare Service Mandate
<b>Ministry of Women Children and Social Welfare</b>	Department of Women and Children	Responsible for formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, plans and programmes, studies, training and coordination related to children and protection of orphan children, welfare of children, adoption, Child Welfare Homes.
	Central Child Welfare Board	Formulate, review, evaluate and mobilize resources; implement policies, plans, programmes and activities for the protection of rights and interests of children and their physical and mental development.
<b>Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development</b>	Local Governance and Community Development Programme	In charge of ensuring domestic violence and caste-based discrimination cases are fully resolved or prosecuted.
<b>Ministry of Labor and Employment</b>	Department of Labour	Ensures that National Plan of Child Labour is fully articulated, coordinated and implemented.

## Government Ministries with Social Service Workers

Every country has a unique configuration of how government ministries employ their social service workforce in providing services to children and families. The design of decentralized child protection systems varies from one province/state to the other (i.e. Pakistan and India). All eight countries reported more than one ministry that was responsible for members of the social service workforce. The types of ministries most frequently associated with supporting the social service workforce included configurations of: Law, Justice and Police Services-related ministries; Gender, Family, Women and Children-related ministries; and Social Affairs, Welfare, Federal Affairs and Local Development-related ministries. The breakdown of these ministry groupings across the region is represented in Table 7.<sup>67</sup>



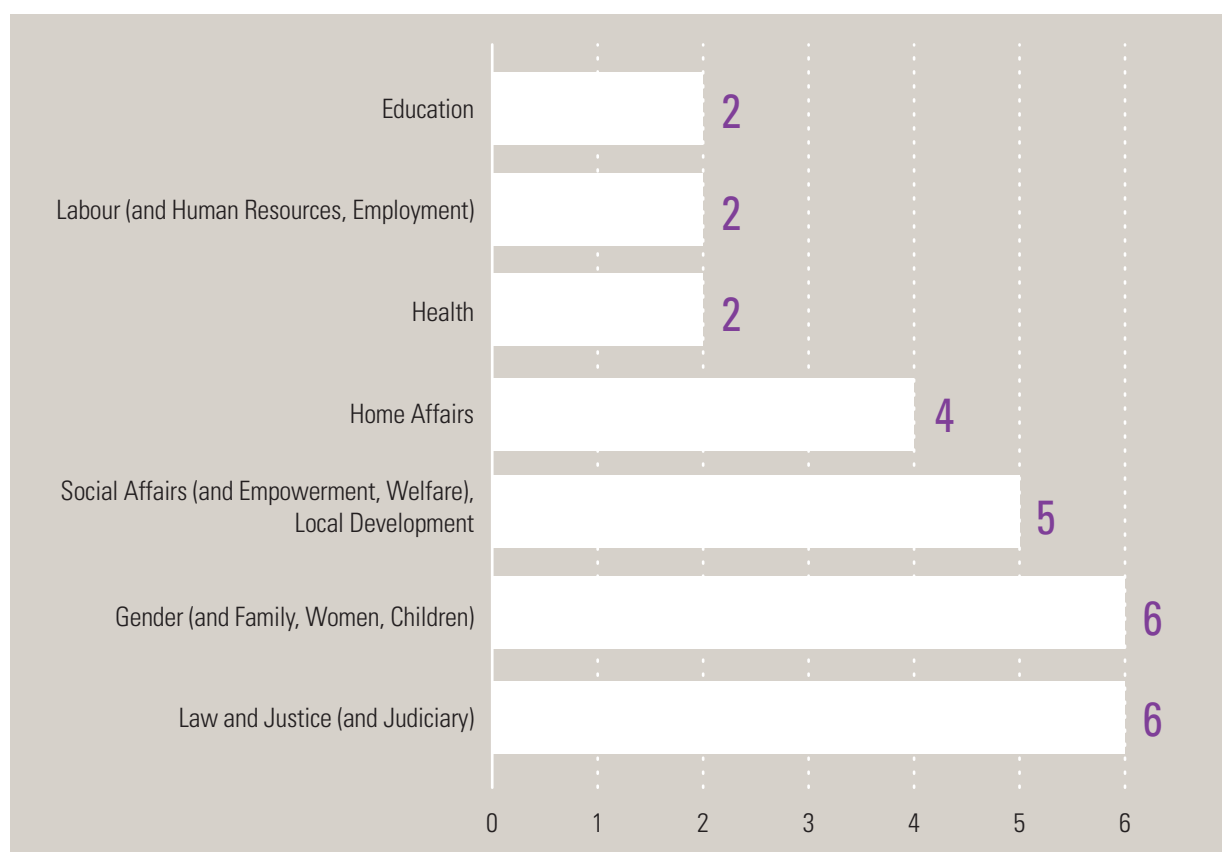
Bhutan: Mother and child.

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SSW Position <sup>66</sup>	Number of Staff in Post	Function and roles
Chief Women Development Officer	21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement women's empowerment programme;</li> <li>• Address gender-based violence, run shelters for women and girl victims of violence, and GBV watch-groups;</li> <li>• Respond to trafficking issues;</li> <li>• Run Paralegal Committee (PLC) Programme.</li> </ul>
Women Development Officer	69	
Child Protection Officer	14	
Child Protection Inspector	52	
Women Development Inspector	214	
Assistant Women Development Inspector	267	
National Programme Adviser	1	
Child Rights Resource Person	8	
Programme Manager	1	
Project Coordinator	1	
Child Protection Officer	1	
Project Officer	1	
Programme Officer	2	
Programme Assistant	7	
Social Development Officer	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive cases of domestic violence and caste-related discrimination;</li> <li>• Attempt to resolve cases;</li> <li>• Ensure appearance of alleged perpetrators for judicial proceedings.</li> </ul>
Factory Inspector	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct unannounced child labour inspections;</li> <li>• Prosecute and impose punishments on child labour complaints;</li> <li>• Ensure removal of children from labour situations.</li> </ul>

**Table 7: Number of Countries Reporting Government SSW by the Type of Ministry**



## Titles Used for Government Workers

As diverse as countries' ministerial configurations and names are, so too are the wide range of social service workforce titles used in these countries. There was a total of 127 unique titles listed for the eight countries from the questionnaire responses. The most frequently recorded title response was Social Worker (10), followed by: Social Service Officer (5), Probation Officer (4) and Child Protection Officer (4). A total of 13 job titles were used more than once. Job titles represent the function of the worker but in many instances the levels of these positions cannot be inferred merely by the job title. Many of the same job titles appeared in multiple departments and at different functional levels.<sup>68</sup>

## Ratios of Government Workers to Child Population

The UNICEF Social Service Workforce Strengthening Programme Guidance includes the output indicator:

- **Number of social service workers with responsibility for child protection per 100,000 children, according to type (cadre; governmental and non-governmental)**

This indicator pursues data on the ratio of social service workers to the total child population and is also included in an upcoming Implementation Handbook to accompany *'INSPIRE: seven strategies for ending violence against children'*, a package that identifies evidence-based strategies that have shown success in reducing violence against children.<sup>69</sup> The data in Table 8 represent the composition of government social service workers for each country based on the diverse range of position titles reported in each country. India and Pakistan have a decentralized social service workforce, and the data presented in the Table reflect the provinces or states within these countries where information was available. The numbers include the current number of workers in their post and not the current number of positions authorized.

The ratios in Table 8 may suggest the level of responsiveness and availability of the social service workforce. A lower ratio may indicate there are more available workers who are less burdened with excessive caseloads that lead to burnout, who are able to provide a higher degree of overall quality. However, this type of analysis

may be better suited to longitudinal comparisons within countries, as numerous factors like the wide range of workforce definitions, varied levels of accuracy of data collected, relative degrees of isolation for some percentages of the total population and other contextual variations that exist, make cross-country comparisons difficult.

### Box 5

*"The various capacity-building initiatives have helped the School Guidance Counsellors to create a safe space for children to report abuse as well as for early identification of abuse. The School Guidance Counsellors have also been able to help parents to understand vulnerabilities and risks that threaten the development of a child and educate their children on safety tips."*

– Tashi Pelzom, Chief, Counselling Division, Department of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education, Bhutan

It should also be noted that this data may be skewed by varying social service workforce definitions within countries and the information that was gathered as a result. For example, in countries with high ratios such as Sri Lanka, included in the count of government workers are 21,438 Samurdhi officers working in the Department of Samurdhi Development who are responsible for assistance to poor households; 14,023 Grama Niladhari Officers working in the Home Affairs Division and 6,000 Community Health Midwives in the Ministry of Health. The Maldives data include 221 Investigating Officers/Victim Support Officers/Community Engagement Officers working in the Divisions Operations Command in the Maldives Police Service. The Bhutan data include guidance counsellors based in secondary schools employed by the Division of Youth and Sports in the Ministry of Education.

This report attempts to offer an initial baseline for these eight countries, where further reflective conversations can begin. Initially, these conversations might be most fruitful internally for each country, where more context-specific analysis and strategic planning are useful in establishing benchmarks for ideal ratios. In time, a regional conversation may help refine common social service workforce definitions, measurement standards and data collection systems that allow for a higher level

of comparable analysis, planning, advocacy and collaborative improvements.

It is also interesting to make the comparison to data from the human resources for health field and the way that they have developed ratios for health workers. The minimum threshold of 23 doctors, nurses and midwives per 10,000 population that was established by the World Health Organization (WHO) as necessary to deliver essential maternal and child health services. Data from 2010 show that the density of health workers falls below this threshold

in Afghanistan (7 per 10,000 population) and Bangladesh (6 per 10,000 population).<sup>70</sup> However, taking this same method and applying it to calculations of social service worker to 10,000 total population (rather than only including population under 18), the ratio of social service worker in Afghanistan is .03 worker per 10,000 population and in Bangladesh, .21 worker per 10,000 population).<sup>71</sup> This is vastly below the availability of the health workforce. Three countries (Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka) are above 1 worker per 10,000 population.

**Table 8: Number of Governmental Social Service Workers with Responsibility for Child Protection per 100,000 Children**

Country	Number of Government SSW	Population of Children under 18 <sup>72</sup>	Number of Government SSW per 100,000 Children
Afghanistan	110	17,744,000	0.62
Bangladesh	3,454	56,869,000	6.07
Bhutan	246	259,000	94.98
India-Chhattisgarh (2011)	362	25,541,196 <sup>73</sup>	1.42
India-West Bengal (2011)	307	91,347,736 <sup>74</sup>	0.34
India-Rajasthan (2011)	10,162	68,621,012 <sup>75</sup>	14.81
Maldives	914	117,000	781.2
Nepal	670	11,190,000	5.99
Pakistan-Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	81	12,644,000 (under 19 years) <sup>76</sup>	0.64
Pakistan-Sindh	240	17,984,000 (under 19 years) <sup>77</sup>	1.33
Pakistan-Punjab	396	45,809,000 <sup>78</sup>	0.86
Sri Lanka	31,750	6,020,000	527.41

The UNICEF 'Social Service Workforce Strengthening Programme Guidance' includes the output indicator:

- **Vacancy rates of government social service workforce positions by cadre**<sup>79</sup>

This indicator tracks vacancy rates of government social service workforce positions by cadre and includes all civil service/public-sector staff posts within the various ministries that hire social service workforce personnel. It is important to measure the hiring gaps in personnel, as it helps provide some insights on existing human capacity in the management and provision of

critical social services. There may be many reasons why government-approved positions remain unfilled, including: insufficient budgets, ineffective recruitment or other human resources policies, lack of adequately qualified workforce, etc., and this indicator helps initiate important conversations on what may be contributing to high or prolonged vacancies. Additionally, this indicator helps ensure a higher level of accountability with government ministries tasked at recruitment for these positions.

Vacancy rate data for 2017 were inconsistently reported through questionnaire surveys and follow-up emails for this report. This information was also unavailable in the child protection system mapping reports carried out in most countries. Table 9 below captures only positions

that both identified an authorized number of government positions and a corresponding current number of positions filled. In many instances, only a portion of the total positions reported offered both an authorized number of positions and an actual number of positions filled.

**Table 9: Vacancy Rates of Government SSW Positions by Cadre**

Country	Number of Government SSW positions authorized	Number of Government SSW positions filled	Total % of SSW Government positions filled
<b>Afghanistan</b>	110	110	100%
<b>Bangladesh</b>	4,258	3,454	81%
<b>Bhutan</b>	*	246	*
<b>India-Chhattisgarh</b>	417	362	87%
<b>India-West Bengal</b>	352	307	87%
<b>India-Rajasthan</b>	10,586	10,162	96%
<b>Maldives</b>	*	914	*
<b>Nepal</b>	1,231	670	54%
<b>Pakistan-Khyber Pakhtunkhwa</b>	115	81	70%
<b>Pakistan-Sindh</b>	250	240	96%
<b>Pakistan-Punjab</b>	455	396	87%
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	*	31,750	*
<i>*notes information is incomplete</i>			

## Non-Governmental Workforce

As noted above, government workers play a critical role in the social service system. However, government workforce numbers pale in comparison to the numbers of non-governmental workers. Non-governmental workers will frequently support or directly deliver critical services to children and their families. They are an integral part of the workforce. The focus, funding and affiliations of these organizations that employ the non-governmental social service workforce are often diverse and include: community-based organizations, civil society organizations, non-profit non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private sector organizations and secular or faith-based organizations. Coordination among these workers and between these workers and government workers is an important challenge for all countries to address. When countries fail to empower a

properly resourced mechanism to systematically define roles and responsibilities and coordinate government and non-governmental efforts, there will likely be a disconnect in providing key social services. Lack of coordination weakens workers' efforts and leads to system inefficiencies that over time become much more expensive to repair.

### Titles Used for Non-governmental Workers

Job titles for non-governmental social service workers abound and reflect the diversity of their roles and functions. In most countries, only a very small sample size of the entire non-governmental workforce was available for this report. The challenges in collecting non-governmental data for this report may reflect the lack of coordination and information-sharing currently existing in

these countries. This is a common issue globally, although some countries outside the region have established human resource information systems that include non-governmental workers or gather occupational census data or rely on entities such as professional associations registration bodies to gather this information across different employers.

All eight countries did provide at least one non-governmental social service job title, and there was a total of 50 unique job titles reported. Ten job titles appeared in multiple countries, with social worker appearing in four different countries and cited most frequently. Other job titles appearing in multiple countries included: case manager, programme or project manager/officer/coordinator, child protection officer, reintegration officer and supervisor.

### Examples of the Non-governmental Social Service Workforce at a Glance by Country

The text below features one example of the non-governmental social service workforce from each country.

**Afghanistan:** The Child Protection Action Network (CPAN), largely comprised of NGOs, is coordinated and managed by the Government of Afghanistan. It was created to overcome constraints related to limited services and resources available. The government with the support of UNICEF carried out a mapping exercise in six provinces with 55 CPAN members to assess perceptions of the child protection system. Sixty-five per cent of CPAN members have over five years' experience in social service-related work.<sup>80</sup> In general, NGOs are more accustomed to operating within a humanitarian framework, at times in parallel with established government systems. NGOs provide a range of child protection services with the most popular being an integrated package of services that often includes an education component along with a lesser focus on protection.<sup>81</sup>

**Bangladesh:** Many NGOs working in child protection and or child rights facilitate Children's Clubs or forums within their programmes as a way to promote child participation in Bangladesh. Community Based Child Protection Committees (CBCPCs) are the grass-roots-level committees to monitor the child rights situation at the community level and report to the Social Workers or Child Help Line 1098 on child rights violations

or violence against children. CBCPCs are also oriented on available services at the subnational level for establishing referral pathways through CBCPCs and Social Workers to service providers. CBCPC members also assist Probation Officers for follow-up with children in conflict with the law and are in the community through diversion. CBCPCs are represented by community people, teachers, adolescent boys and girls and social workers. Critical cases of children are taken by the Social Workers to the Upazilla Probation Officers or Social Service Officers to present at child welfare board meetings. Probation Officers can place critical cases for immediate meetings, and members take decisions on services. Probation Officers submit follow-up reports to child welfare boards.

**Bhutan:** Save the Children collaborated with UNICEF and the National Commission for Women and Children to support the Royal Bhutan Police station on community and youth-friendly policing programmes. "These partnership programmes have been educational for us," said Major Karma Rigzin, the officer in charge of the Woman and Child Protection Unit in the Paro police station, Bhutan. "We understand the complexities surrounding youth better now, and we are much more aware of child rights and protection. Police stations now have separate specialized units for victims of abuse and violence. Unlike in the past, our services are not limited to just policing. Today, we even counsel women and children about their rights."

### Box 6 Community Based Child Protection Committee Intervention in Bangladesh

Kayum, age 12, was arrested by police in May 2014 along with his friends for beating the driver of a van with his friends. When police tried to declare that Kayum should be tried as an adult and demanded monetary compensation for his release, Kayum's mother contacted the Community Based Child Protection Committee (CBCPC) in their rural community in Bangladesh. The family has faced difficult times, living in a tiny thatched hut where his mother earns very little as a rice mill labourer and the father has abandoned them. Through the intensive involvement of the CBCPC and a probation officer, they were able to show his birth certificate and advocate for release to his mother's care. He regularly attends a JJS adolescent class, is continuing with his studies including specialized training in radio programming and is refocusing his energy through competitive wrestling. As part of the diversion process, Kayum remains under observation by the CBCPC but he is on a positive path.

### Box 7

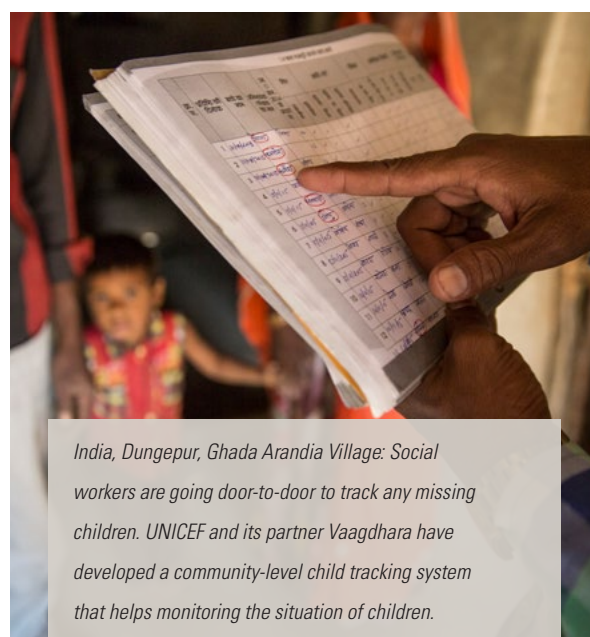
The Royal Bhutan Police share that the newly developed programmes not only put youngsters at the forefront, they also create awareness on crime and encourage youth to take up community policing to instil positive values. This considerably improves police-public relations by making information available, opening up communication networks and, most importantly, enhancing trust and understanding between the police and youth.

**India:** Plan International and their NGO partners are supporting more than 1,300 community-based Child Protection Committees (CPCs) in seven states.<sup>82</sup> Plan is advocating for the CPCs to be recognized as the lowest level of child protection structures. The CPCs have formal links to the local government and strengthened links with protection structures and welfare mechanisms at the block, district and state levels as articulated in the government's centrally sponsored Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS). This nationally supported scheme strives to enable protective environments in the community and family levels for all children. These efforts seek to institutionalize essential services and monitor these through an information system and general capacity-building improvements at all levels.<sup>83</sup> In Uttarkhand, India, Plan and partners are strengthening the capacity of existing village councils to act as CPCs. In locations where the village CPCs are empowered to effectively address child protection issues, village CPCs have formed federations. This has enabled them to foster cross-learning, mutual collaboration and joint advocacy, especially when trying to secure services and support from higher levels.<sup>84</sup>

**Maldives:** Since 1995, the Society for Health Education (SHE) has been working with children, parents and teachers on addressing violence against children (VAC). In the Maldives capital, Malé, a new child abuse prevention programme was piloted in 2011 at Ameer Ahmed preschool. This programme brought children, parents, teachers and senior management of schools together in collaborative efforts to find a more comprehensive response to child abuse. Facilitated discussions with stakeholders helped define local contexts and conditions that enable violence to occur, as well as possible preventive measures

that parents and teachers might be able to take. Skilled child facilitators introduced safety concepts and behaviours to children through dance, which helped cultivate a trusting environment for children and their parents to practice and reinforce these skills. This multi-stakeholder engagement strategy has endured as a supportive connection and linkage between schools, families and NGOs for future partnerships.

**Nepal:** Next Generation Nepal (NGN) is a non-profit non-governmental organization that seeks to prevent children from being trafficked into abusive orphanages. NGN trains its workers to support families in their efforts to reintegrate and re-establish caring and loving relationships with children that have been trafficked. After the earthquake of 2015, a dramatic new surge of trafficking of children from resource-poor families in Nepal began. NGN's Community Anti-trafficking (CAT) Project was established to counter these dangerous trends through prevention, family strengthening supports and outreach campaigns to communities most at risk of trafficking. NGN utilized a variety of social marketing and engagement campaigns including: street dramas, children's rallies, leaflets and radio broadcasts to reach thousands of people from rural local communities at risks. NGN also partnered with the Nepali police to monitor vehicles for unaccompanied or trafficked children at three checkpoints. These efforts intercepted 40 children all of whom were reintegrated with their families. The social marketing and engagement campaigns are credited for a 50 per cent reduction in intercepted trafficked children.<sup>85</sup>



*India, Dungepur, Ghada Arandia Village: Social workers are going door-to-door to track any missing children. UNICEF and its partner Vaagdhara have developed a community-level child tracking system that helps monitoring the situation of children.*

## Box 8

Children and Women in Social Service and Human Rights (CWISH, Nepal) was established in 1993 and is a non-profit social justice organization that works in child protection, education and family empowerment.

*“The part of the job I like the most is reintegration, to see the children happy with their family. It makes me glad that I was able to change a life of someone. I have witnessed that even a small effort from an individual can make much difference in someone’s life.”*

– Bikki Shrestha is a child rights officer working in Lalitpur with CWISH Nepal. He holds a bachelor’s degree in social work. In his current role he assists in family reunifications and training of child protection committees.

**Pakistan:** Group Development Pakistan (GDP) is a Pakistani non-profit organization committed to ensuring children are respected and protected from violence, abuse and discrimination. GDP has expertise in building institutional and technical capabilities of organizations working in child protection through imaginative, accessible and culturally grounded approaches. The Listen to my Voice programme engaged over 1000 youth, children, caregivers and other stakeholders helped raise awareness and advocated for child protection in Rawalpindi and Murree, Pakistan. These volunteers also helped gather local-level data used in a situational analysis on child trafficking that informed a local strategy for advocacy campaign. These collective voices combined with other programme efforts have resulted in the drafting of a bill on child trafficking and pornography, which was submitted at the National Assembly by the Government of Pakistan.<sup>86</sup>

**Sri Lanka:** Collaborative efforts between non-governmental organizations, the Government of Sri Lanka, local communities and UNICEF have established effective and sustainable village-level structures comprised of community volunteers and government officials for promoting children’s development and protection. These efforts helped define the parameters for the formally recognized Village Child Development

Committees (VCDCs) and ways government and non-governmental actors could support these collective efforts.<sup>87</sup> UNICEF’s technical and financial support to 191 VCDCs has helped support a range of local protection initiatives and positive outcomes, including the prevention of 2,200 children and youth from dropping out of school.<sup>88</sup>

## D. PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

### Background on the Role of Professional Associations

In this report we define association as ‘a body of persons engaged in the same profession, formed usually to control entry into the profession, maintain standards and represent the profession in discussions with other bodies’. Professional associations advance the professional status, prominence, improvement and expansion of the occupation they represent and can play an important role in propelling the social service workforce agenda. Associations can serve as an effective broker in supporting individual workers, promoting the profession and advancing social policies. To effectively advocate for these shared needs of the social service workforce, associations will sometimes focus or specialize on specific needs of the workforce, such as improving the education standards or research practices; targeting specific contextual challenges like exploitive child work, preventing and reducing violence or improving emergency preparedness and response. Often associations will work with a range of stakeholders including: local communities; government ministries; influential country leaders; learning institutions and research organizations; and of course, their frequently diverse membership.

Professional associations can also help raise the profile of workers and help to shift the national discourse and public perceptions on the value of the social service workforce. Other critical roles include the introduction and establishment of: a code of ethics, professional standards and evidence-based practices; certifications; licensing and registration; professional development; promoting research; and advocating for contextually driven, evidence-informed policies. Some examples of national professional associations relevant to the social service workforce in the region include: the Social Workers Association

Nepal (SWAN), the National Association of Professional Social Workers in India (NAPSWI) and the Bombay Association of Trained Social Workers (BATSW).

In some instances, international associations may partner with national associations in attempts to learn about innovations happening at the local or national level or test and apply global best practices through a context-specific test case. These collective efforts can be mutually beneficial and lead to new ways of thinking at the national and global levels, while contributing to the broader learning and evidence base of the field. International associations can help link practitioners into collective problem-solving possibilities with jointly sponsored learning events and advocacy. Several international associations that are currently active in collaborating with national associations in South Asia include: the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and their regional bodies such as the Asian

and Pacific Association for Social Work Education (APASWE).

## Professional Association Data

The UNICEF Social Service Workforce Strengthening Programme Guidance includes the output indicator:

- **Professional associations recognized by the national government as legitimate and legally approved**

This UNICEF output indicator monitors the presence of national professional associations for social service practitioners. This report recorded that five out of eight countries are current members of a social service workforce association. Regarding the two countries that are not members: Pakistan has a government worker's union that represents a broad range of government workers including the social service workforce, and Afghanistan is in the process of establishing a professional social work association.

Table 10: Professional Associations by Country

Country	Association Name	Code of Ethics	Annual Conference
<b>Bangladesh</b>	Association of Social Workers Bangladesh		X
<b>Bhutan</b>	Bhutan Board of Certified Counsellors	X	X
<b>India</b>	Bombay Association of Trained Social Workers (BATSW)	X	X
	Karnataka Association of Professional Social Workers	X	
	Kerala Association of Professional Social Workers (KAPS)	X	X
	Maharashtra Association of Social Work Educators (MASWE)	X	X
	National Association of Professional Social Workers in India (NAPSWI)	X	X
	Federation of India Network of Professional Social workers Associations (INPSWA)	X	X
	Indian Society of Professional Social Work	X	X
<b>Nepal</b>	Social Workers Association of Nepal (SWAN)	X	X
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	The Sri Lanka Association of Professional Social Workers		X



### Box 9

Eighty-three per cent of professional associations required members to sign a Code of Ethics.

The UNICEF 'Social Service Workforce Strengthening Programme Guidance' includes the output indicator:

- **Publicly disseminated professional codes of ethics and licensing regulations for each SSW cadre**<sup>89</sup>

Licensing regulations refer to the legal endorsement of professional practice. This term is sometimes confused or conflated with: *registration* – a process in enrolling in a professional registry; or *certification* – often connoting a qualification competency or academic/training level. This UNICEF output indicator tracks the availability of codes of ethics for social service workers and the existence of any policy or law that upholds a process to license or register individual workers. Currently none of the eight countries in this study reported having a licensing procedure established.

### Box 10

Seventy-five per cent of countries reported at least one professional association but only India reported more than one.

In time, countries may consider endorsing licensing regulations in attempt to further professionalize occupations to improve and standardize quality, while raising the stature of this profession. However, these quality standard improvements are not without their costs. Establishing an accountable licensing system presumes multiple steps in coordination and enforcement. The investment in time and financial resources in implementing and maintaining the system could be significant. Additionally, it would be important to ensure these costs do not dissuade newly trained, resource-poor social service workers from entering the sector.

The examples below briefly highlight some of the history and work that country associations do to advance the professional status and agenda of workforce strengthening and

broadly support their members' needs and the communities they serve. In many instances this work helps the social service workforce engage communities they serve and increases recognition of their role.

### Bangladesh

The Bangladesh Association of Social Workers has been an active advocate for workers' rights for many years by bringing the appalling conditions, safety standards and wages that workers endure to the attention of the public. The Bangladesh Association of Social Workers (affiliated with the International Federation of Social Workers) focused the public's attention on the tragic Rana Plaza (Building) collapse in 2015 and the importance of its work in providing support to the survivors.<sup>90</sup>

### India

India has a long history of supporting social work associations. In 1960, the Association for Schools of Social Work in India was established and operated until 1996. In 1961, the Indian Association of Trained Social Workers was launched, and in 1970 the Indian Society for Professional Social Work (ISPSW) came into existence. The ISPSW has held annual conferences to unite the field and produces a journal. The National Association of Professional Social Workers in India (NAPSWI) was initiated in 2005 and has grown in strength and numbers to become the largest association of social workers in India. NAPSWI and ISPSW operate at the national level and they have membership from different states. The Bombay Association of Trained Social Workers is limited to the city of Mumbai in Maharashtra, and the members are practitioners. Similar in nature are the Maharashtra Association of Social Work Educators (MASWE) and the Kerala Association of Professional Social Workers.

### Nepal

In October 2017 devastating floods and landslides claimed 160 lives and destroyed houses and livelihoods in Baluwatar, Jhapa. Members of the Social Workers Association of Nepal (SWAN) conducted a needs assessment and situational analysis and later provided psychological first aid to the victims of the affected areas.<sup>91</sup>

## E. POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

Public-sector policies and legislation are the foundational blueprints that enable the establishment, maintenance and growth of a country's social service workforce and system. Policies and legislation are ideally available to define mandates and outline the structure of the social service workforce and frameworks that support the workforce. The degree to which policies and legislation are comprehensive and clear to relevant stakeholders will determine the level of their coordinated implementation.

The UNICEF 'Social Service Workforce Strengthening Programme Guidance' includes the output indicator:

- **Existence of a national strategic plan on strengthening the social service workforce**<sup>92</sup>

It is critical to workforce strengthening to have a plan or framework that outlines and defines roles and responsibilities for social service workers and practice standards, among other system details including budget and information management systems.<sup>93</sup> The following outlines, as much as possible given the availability of policies and legislation that incorporate mention of the social service workforce, the ways in which policies and legislation throughout the region help lay the foundation for workforce strengthening, by defining and/or mandating workforce roles and responsibilities numbers or budgets.

### Social Service Workforce in policy and legislation by country

**Afghanistan:** The Government of Afghanistan defines the Statutory Child Protection Actors and lists the Child Protection Secretariat under the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD) as the primary authority responsible for the protection of children. It also spells out the mandated child protection roles and responsibilities of the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Women's Affairs.<sup>94</sup> Afghanistan uses several different forms of jurisprudence (state law, customary law and sharia law).<sup>95</sup> A National Strategy for Children at Risk was formalized in 2006, which called for the hiring of a cadre of trained social workers focused on child protection.<sup>96</sup> The National Strategy for Children at Risk promoted the rights of children,

disabled, orphans, children working on the street, children in conflict with the law and children with mothers in detention. Numerous issue-specific child protection policies were passed but a 2016 country mapping report suggested these new policies resulted in little reduction of protection risks or impact for children.<sup>97</sup> Implementation of the 2006 strategy stalled as well. Currently, new Children's Act legislation is being finalized by the Afghanistan legislature. Preparations have also begun in developing a new National Child Protection Policy with strategy, drawing from recent studies conducted by UNICEF and other child protection actors in the country.<sup>98</sup> The Government has also taken tangible steps in responding to child marriage with the introduction of the National Action Plan to Eliminate Early and Child Marriage. It is hoped that this action will significantly reduce the prevalence of child marriage.<sup>99</sup>

**Bangladesh:** There are more than 35 laws charged to protect children from neglect, cruelty, exploitation and abuse, and to promote their development. The Children Act of 2013 adopted provisions of Best Interests of the Child and was passed to ensure overall protection of children and their rights. It has been revised in 2018 to clarify court jurisdiction to hear cases of offences against children, define custody of children produced to police during weekends and holidays, state timeline for disposal, etc. By enactment of the Children Act 2013, the Government has officially recognized the role of social workers in protecting rights of children in the community and imposed proactive social work as the core of protection for children, under the Department of Social Services. The National Child Policy was originally drafted in 1994 and a new Children Policy 2011 has been adopted emphasizing children's right to health, education, cultural activities and leisure, protection, birth registration and identity. Birth registration was made obligatory and free. In addition, the Act established Child Welfare Boards as a statutory body in Bangladesh to supervise and monitor the work and conditions of the Child Development Centres and Care Homes as well as to ensure the best interests of the children residing within the jurisdiction of the board. It is mandatory to form multidisciplinary boards at its administrative levels of Upazilla and District. The Act states that the district commissioner is the president of the 11-member district-level board, where the Deputy Director of the District Social Services

Office takes the role of Secretary. The Upazila Nirbahi Officer (Chief Executive Officer of Upazilla) leads the Upazilla-level Child Welfare Board and the Upazilla Probation Officer takes the role of Secretary.

**Bhutan:** Bhutan adopted the Child Care and Protection Act 2011. It outlines the role and responsibility of NGOs when working with children.<sup>100</sup> It also mandates that protection officers are to be recruited and placed in each of 20 districts. The Protection Officers will be responsible for providing protection services to women and children in difficult circumstances and children in conflict with the law. However, at present, due to resource and administrative constraints, none of the protection officers have been recruited. The National Plan of Action on Child Protection provides a road map for the implementation of the Child Care and Protection Act and for creating an enabling environment towards building the child protection system in the country. The Child Care and Protection Rules and Regulations of Bhutan 2015 detail the mandated roles and responsibilities for child welfare officers and probation officers including: provision of developing a code of ethics; monitoring; capacity-building; supervision, complaint mechanism and disciplinary action. Additionally, it provides a list of minimum qualification criteria for child welfare officers and probation officers.<sup>101</sup>

**India:** The Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) was launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India in 2009. The Scheme is primarily an integration of components in three existing Schemes: a Juvenile Justice programme; an integrated programme for children living and working on the street (including Childline Services); and a programme of assistance to homes (Shishu Greh) to promote in-country adoption. The objective of the Scheme is to ensure intersectoral response at all levels; institutionalize essential services and strengthen structures; enhance capacities at all levels; improve public awareness; strengthen child protection at family and community levels and create a data base for child protection services.<sup>102</sup> Additional policies in the 2015 Juvenile Justice Act (care and protection of children) describe the composition and qualifications of the Juvenile Justice Boards; including the provision of two social workers, one of whom shall be a

woman; roles and the type of training they are to receive.<sup>103</sup> The Act outlines roles for child welfare officers in working with juveniles in conflict with the law. It mentions that the chairpersons of Child Welfare Committees should have a postgraduate degree, such as in social work. This Act is implemented through the government's Child Protection Services Scheme and provides the budget and structure for the workforce.<sup>104</sup>

The Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls, which is managed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, outlines the roles of and training that needs to be provided to community development programme officers, who oversee all activities at the community level, such as those related to vocational education and nutrition.<sup>105</sup>

**Maldives:** The Decentralization Act instructs Island Councils to offer social security services and take steps to end domestic violence and provide survivors with services and support.<sup>106</sup> Recent Regulations include: The Seventh National Development Plan (2006–2010) lists several intervention areas articulating the strategy for the Ministry of Gender and Family, which were revised and became key tenets of the plan to include: developing a multidisciplinary protection system for children and women; establishing support services for children and families; strengthening justice and legal systems to protect children and women; and mainstreaming gender and child rights. The National Plan of Action towards the well-being of the Maldivian Child for the decade 2000–2010 provides a national framework to address child protection issues by strengthening laws against offenders, increasing rehabilitative services, attempting to address root causes of abuse and raising awareness through campaigns of harmful impact.<sup>107</sup> In 2016 the Maldives Ministry of Health released the National Action Plan Addressing Gender Based Violence.<sup>108</sup> On November 2017 the Maldives co-hosted a High-level Side Event on Ending Violence Against Children (VAC) with Estonia and Nigeria in New York. The Minister of Gender and Family presented the Maldives Action Plan for Preventing and Responding to VAC at this meeting, which has been endorsed by stakeholders. She also announced that a Child Participation Forum was convened to incorporate children's voices into the VAC National Action Plan.<sup>109</sup> In 2017 a Judicial Symposium on Child Rights and the Juvenile Justice System was

held to address the largely disjointed and intermittent laws regulating juvenile justice. This symposium developed a two-year Action Plan for strengthening the Juvenile Justice System, which outlined direction and priority areas.<sup>110</sup> In 2017 UNICEF supported the development of the 'Guidelines for Child Care Homes in Maldives'. These guidelines have not been formally approved; however, two institutions under the Ministry of Gender and Family have started utilizing this reference in the centres.<sup>111</sup> Foster Care Regulations and State Care Regulations have been reviewed and approved by both the Family Court and the Attorney General's Office but they have not been enacted through the needed gazetting process.<sup>112</sup>

**Nepal:** Nepal was one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, which led the way for the Children's Act (1992), Children's Rules (1995) and a range of child protection issue-focused acts, rules, strategic frameworks, guidelines, standards, including: child labour, gender-based violence, trafficking, residential institutional care, inter-country adoption, juvenile justice, etc. These frameworks included structures, mechanisms, mandates, functions and funds, which helped shape enabling and protective environments for children. The Children's Act outlines that the Central and District Children Welfare Board should consist of 21 members at the maximum including the members from among the social workers, women social workers, medical practitioners, child psychologists and teachers. The Children's Act also references Child Welfare Officers, in that the Government of Nepal may appoint Child Welfare Officers in the required number and that a role of these officers is to inspect the Children's Welfare Homes, orphanages or centres at least twice a year and to "make necessary arrangements" for children without families or a place to live.<sup>113</sup>

Nepal changed from a unitary system or centralized government to a federal system or decentralized government after the 2015 Constitution established the federal structure. Implementing this structural change has proved to be a challenge.<sup>114</sup> Legislative reform efforts are currently proceeding, including a revision of the Children's Act, which includes substantive provisions for social workers, child welfare authorities and probation officers. It is expected that new rules will establish a

regulatory body or assign an existing agency as the authority to direct the listing or registration and other matters relating to social service workforce professionals.<sup>115</sup>

**Pakistan:** The 18th Constitutional Amendment of 2010 redefined Pakistan as a decentralized federation, comprised of four provinces, two federal territories and one autonomous territory that have considerable autonomy in developing policy and legislation.<sup>116</sup> Child protection is handled differently in each province and frequently does not have a dedicated budget.<sup>117</sup> The Child Protection and Welfare Act, 2010 of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa does articulate social service workforce structures and mandates through the District Social Welfare Office or a District Child Protection Unit (CPU), as well as outlines roles of a child protection officer and qualifications. However, there are no fixed professional standards for social workers. The province is in the process of creating a child protection plan.<sup>118</sup> The provincial Sindh Children's Act (1955) is an integrated law that lays out procedures for working with children in need of protection; however, it is not being fully implemented. The Sindh Child Protection Authority (SCPA) Act 2013 protects children by establishing provincial level Authority and CPUs at the district level. However, the Authority has not yet been established; the 2013 Act does not override existing legislation.<sup>119</sup> Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) law is applicable in Punjab and addresses multiple thematic areas of child protection. The Juvenile Justice System Ordinance (JJSO) 2000 is the most relevant law, also applicable in Punjab. Punjab has enacted laws requiring birth registration but this is currently not free.<sup>120</sup> The Child Protection Act has been enacted in Balochistan in 2016 and is aligned with international minimum standards of child protection. It dictates that the District Social Welfare Office in the District Child Protection Unit should be headed by a qualified Child Protection Officer, who holds full and comprehensive responsibility for case management and referral of all reported cases of child abuse in the district. It further states that "Child Protection Officers shall receive training in social work and child protection, as provided for in minimum standards set by the Government." It also outlines the roles of a child protection officer in reporting child abuse as well as a process for creating a child protection plan.<sup>121</sup>

**Sri Lanka:** The 13th Amendment to the Constitution in Sri Lanka (1987) has devolved many of the child protection services to the provinces, forming a dual administrative system. Police and court system child protection-related services are centrally governed and administered. Civil and common law systems have played an important role in informing Sri Lanka's mixed legal system.<sup>122</sup> The National Policy on Child Development (2017–2022) emphasizes a child's right to nutrition, health, shelter, education, safety and non-discrimination. The policy stipulates the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders for children, including community development workers and social service officers and aims to provide an enabling environment for effective implementation

of various programmes for child protection. The Sri Lanka Association of Professional Social Workers (Incorporation) Act, No. 16 of 2014 provides a mandate for establishing a social work association. The National Policy on Alternative Care developed by the Department of Probation and Child Care Services, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs is intended to serve as a guide to child protection officers and other service providers in providing foster care services. Finally, the National Guidelines for Village Child Development Committees provides a list of position titles, numbers and roles of officials (ex officio) and the social service workforce as Village Child Development Committee (VCDC) members at village level.<sup>123</sup>



*Afghanistan, Mazar:  
Girl smiling.*

*Afghanistan: A young Afghan boy smiles standing near his house in Kaj Guzar neighbourhood on the outskirts of the city of Mazar in the northern part of the country.*



## VI. CHILDREN'S VOICES

### A. OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

An important quality indicator for a responsive social service workforce is ensuring that the workforce and services they provide are accountable to children. World Vision conducted a study towards the end of 2017 to consolidate information about the social service workforce from the perspective of children in Bangladesh and India.<sup>124</sup> The main objective of the study was to capture the opinion and experiences of children to analyse and better understand the degree of access and capacity of the social service workforce in providing high-quality services to children. This study aimed to identify national trends and share innovative practices being undertaken locally and nationally and explore the spaces available to enhance the overall functioning of the workforce and help inform this report.

### B. METHODOLOGY

The World Vision report engaged 100 children during three consultations in Bangladesh at village level: Mymensingh, Nandial, Dhaka Sishu and one at the district level in Chittgong. In India, 230 children were involved in discussions held in Delhi, Mumbai and in Coimbatore and rural Rajahmundry. The children ranged from

10 to 18 years in age and represented a diverse segment of culture, gender, caste and rural and urban backgrounds. Focus group discussions (FGD) were carried out by gender in groups of 8 to 13 and in familiar, safe settings. Questions included the following topics: children's awareness and knowledge on child protection issues; availability of the social services for child protection; availability of response and reporting mechanisms; capacity of the social service provider; and accessibility of services/service provider to the children.

### C. CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS OF AVAILABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF THE SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE AND SERVICES PROVIDED

#### Bangladesh

"There [are a] significant number of child protection workers in the community", according to children who participated in the focus group. This perception is confirmed with worker numbers ranging from 15 to 150 in villages and municipalities. Children identified a range of institutions with child protection workers in Kamalapur and Mohamadpur.

Child Helpline is a toll-free number that children can dial or text in times of crisis for help. Most

children acknowledged that they have heard about Child Help Line-1098. Child Help Line personnel are often able to respond through counselling support and linkages to immediate emergency and long-term referrals with community-based interventions, reintegration and follow-up based on the child's need and situation. Child Help Line is available throughout the country any time or day of the week<sup>125</sup> and usually can respond within 12 hours to reported needs. Some children were completely unaware of what referral services were, while others expressed the view that services and the workforce were not reliable, responsive or understanding to their unique gendered and life-stage needs.

According to the Children's Act 2013, Child Affairs Police Officers (CAPOs) are to be recruited by government but to date this position is not available in most police stations. UNICEF is supporting police in 20 United Nations Development Assistance Framework districts and 11 City Corporations to equip Child Help Desk under Child Affairs Police Officers and advocating with Government to assign fulltime CAPOs. Many children were unaware of police specifically assigned to respond to their needs in the community. Some children knew of the existence of a children's court tasked to intervene on children's legal needs. One child said that, "services of government sectors are not good and not child-friendly; police stations/services are [also] not child-friendly."

The government reportedly has a very limited budget for child protection-related work in the community. Local child protection committees are empowered to take urgent action when a case is reported through referrals to locally elected Union Parishad members or doctors. However, children claimed that any service assistance from them requires a fee or bribe.

#### Box 11

*"We do not get support from [local elected officials], police or doctors without paying money."*

– Bangladesh FGD children

## India

Children in the India focus group discussions frequently said that they did not feel safe in their communities often as a result of street lights that did not work or other security concerns. Girls in particular feared public transportation. There are a number of services children identified that they can reach out to in their communities including: Child Help Line, Police Helpline, Child Protection Units (CPUs), Child Welfare Committees (CWC), ambulances, and Women and Children Help Line. Child Help Line is the most frequently used service by children. Children report that Child Help Line responds promptly (within 30 to 60 minutes) and well to their needs.

Children reported that social services and the workers available are not always suitable, compassionate, dependable and child-friendly. Children complained that teachers and community members are commonly not very supportive or accommodating to their needs.

#### Box 12

*"There is a referral mechanism like village level Panchayat...but many times they do not pay much attention to our problems."*

– Kunnathur village child, India

Child protection cases are referred to Child Welfare Committees for legal support. CWCs provide counselling and legal support. World Vision India and Angan Centre help advise and refer children to services but it usually takes days or months to address cases.

Children reported that police regularly only register complaints, do not provide safety, are largely unsupportive to children and do not maintain confidentiality in sensitive cases.

Children's awareness of existing support is also commonly lacking as in the case of an existing Juvenile Board in PIA districts of India, of which reportedly no child was aware.

## D. CHILDREN'S SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE SERVICES AND THE SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE

Children in the focus group discussions in both countries provided feedback on ways that services and the workforce providing them could be improved.

### Bangladesh

- Public places need to be child-friendly
- Information on relevant services
- Awareness-raising activities linked with arts, sports and recreation
- Just and free-of-cost legal support
- Assistance to most vulnerable children
- Functional local child protection committee and professional service providers in place
- Meaningful participation of children in decision-making process

### India

- Social service providers must be child-friendly and provide prompt and efficient services
- Public infrastructures and services should be safe, inclusive, accessible and functional
- Children should have meaningful participation
- Professional counsellors should be in the police station
- More child-friendly parks and spaces



*Bangladesh: Happy (left side), 14 years old, is top of her class. Her family gets support in the form of conditional cash transfer that requires no child marriage, no dropping out of school and no child labour. Happy wants to be a surgeon.*





Nepal: Muslim girl leaders during religious classes at Madrasa Imadul Ghoraba.

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## VII. EMERGING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR COMPREHENSIVE SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE STRENGTHENING

This section will begin by exploring some of the most widely recognized challenges and opportunities that have emerged in the questionnaire responses from the eight countries in South Asia that are featured in this report. As diverse and unique as these countries are, so too are the opportunities existing in each country to address some of these challenges. Yet some common themes do emerge. We will investigate how some of the more frequently referenced challenges might intersect with clustered

opportunities in the region. Finally, we will conclude with some thoughts on potential next steps.

### A. CHALLENGES COUNTRIES FACE IN STRENGTHENING THE SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE

From a list of the options listed in Table 11, respondents in each country were asked to select the top three challenges they face in strengthening the social service

Table 11: Top Challenges Countries in South Asia Face in Strengthening the Social Service Workforce



workforce. Lack of knowledge and skills of the workforce was the most frequently selected challenge.

## B. OPPORTUNITIES FOR COUNTRY-BASED APPROACHES TO WORKFORCE STRENGTHENING

### Planning the Workforce: Workforce needs assessments and funding

All countries struggle in properly financing the social service workforce, and many face challenges in adequately evaluating and designing responsive solutions that address these needs. Planning the social service workforce is fundamental to ensuring that contextual issues are clearly understood and systematically applied. This critical process is a particular challenge for countries that continue or only recently shifted from approaching child protection and social support services through issue-based planning efforts. In the shift from an issue-based response to a systems strengthening approach, many governments failed to properly understand and forecast social service workforce resource needs across ministries. An important aspect of planning workforce needs is having a shared understanding of who comprises the workforce, what the roles and functions of different cadres are, how many workers there are, and where gaps exist both in numbers and in skills to meet the necessary roles and functions.

As noted throughout the report, some milestones in workforce planning have been met in the region. Talented and dedicated workforce experts have helped establish policy instruments that apply culturally grounded, evidence-based best practices to locally defined needs. Collaborative processes like the UNICEF child protection mapping exercises in seven countries (all but India) in the region have brought social service organizations together to discuss shared data and systems strengthening models. These newly introduced partnerships have served as a conceptual bridge in linking related disciplines through common needs towards shared holistic outcomes, inspiring greater mutual understanding and cooperation. Within each country, developing agreed to and clear definitions of the social service workforce will also greatly enhance future planning.

Legislation in some countries is being introduced that mandates appointments of social workers

or child protection workers with specific training, such as in Afghanistan, Bhutan, India and Balochistan in Pakistan. This official act helps compel government funding and helps ensure this funding will be institutionalized. However, there can be notable gaps between enactment of legislation and implementation, such as in Bhutan where positions for protection officers mandated in the Child Care and Protection Act 2011 have not yet been funded and filled. In other countries, legislation has been created that articulates the roles and functions of civil servant social service positions to support specific programmes, such as the Child Care and Protection Rules and Regulations of Bhutan 2015 and the Children's Act in Nepal.

### Developing the Workforce: The need for capacity-building improvements

The top two most commonly identified challenges in the region were related to developing the social service workforce and the perceived general low capacity levels of the workforce. Capacity in this instance refers to workers' technical understanding and their ability to apply this understanding to perform the required duties that are central to addressing child protection issues. The implications of a poorly trained and skilled social service workforce are numerous and far-reaching, from the quality of service provision to the proper functioning of the entire social service system. Similarly, a lack of targeted instructional learning or professional opportunities to improve or update worker competencies were mentioned as a gap. The absence or lack of training and other career enhancement opportunities may limit the ability of workers to perform tasks but will also miss an excellent occasion to link social service workers with a common reference point of understanding a technical standard, operating protocol or new policy that requires collaboration from others. A relative lack of career development opportunities serve as a significant disincentive in attracting and retaining the most talented workers.<sup>126</sup>

At the same time, many countries cited opportunities related to training and education. Degree programmes, training and research is being supported through new collaboratives with government, universities and at times professional associations to work together in contextualizing and modifying curricula to be

culturally relevant and competency-based. Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka all reported recent initiatives to improve curricula for the social service workforce. A number of countries cited newly passed legislation or government-endorsed action plans that define specific worker competencies, roles or responsibilities, and the explicit or implied commitment by the government to support the training of these workers, as noted above. The above-mentioned countries mentioned a number of new government capacity-building programmes that seek to support an established range of core competency standards or training in data collection and information systems. Additionally, countries such as Afghanistan have listed newly introduced policies that reference social work standards for culturally grounded, evidence-based practices that can complement workforce competency-based trainings in supporting improved methodologies in engaging communities and better understand local perspectives and needs.

### **Supporting the Workforce: Perceptions of the importance of the social service workforce**

Respondents in a majority of countries in the region noted that they are confronted by society's shallow understanding of what the social service workforce does to support families and children. Public perceptions in some instances perceive social work as a misguided, unsophisticated, insufficient response, largely being orchestrated by volunteers. In spite of the many decades of academic programmes and research, others may view the social service workforce as a practice devoid of a scholarly history, rigour or evidence base, and discount the important contributions or impact workers make in supporting children and the general public.

Despite the critical views identified, several countries have reported a more recent shift in

public opinion and understanding of the social service workforce. In Pakistan, youth have been inspired to become more involved in supporting the workforce. In some instances, this change was forged through the tumultuous crisis of natural disasters and war. In Sri Lanka, public reflection in post-conflict humanitarian assistance spaces has opened an opportunity to reimagine and redefine an identity that the workforce can aspire to and achieve.

Several countries have reported a change in working relationships with some governments who have a heightened level of enthusiastic support (in part as a result of the child protection mapping exercise) and greater sense of appreciation for the social service workforce, such as reported in Bhutan and the Maldives. In turn, this has brought a much-welcomed momentum swing for progressive reform planning at every level of the social service system. New alliances and leadership opportunities, such as in the Maldives, have also ushered in a greater level of understanding and conceptual applicability.

While the top challenges recorded in questionnaire responses are represented in Table 11, three additional responses received notable recognition as well. Low salaries were cited in Afghanistan, India and the Maldives as a significant challenge. Lack of clarity in roles and vague or missing performance expectations were present in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. A lack of personnel was cited as a significant problem in responses from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Pakistan.

The identification of available workforce data, the challenges and opportunities, in combination with the innovative approaches to strengthening the workforce that are under way, lay the groundwork for comprehensive workforce strengthening plans in each of the eight countries studied for this report.

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