



**ASSESSMENT
OF THE SOCIAL SERVICE
WORKFORCE IN THAILAND**

Nov 2025

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The Thailand Association of Social Workers conducted this assessment on behalf of UNICEF Thailand. For more information about the TASW, visit <https://thaisocialwork.org/>

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Executive Summary

Background

This assessment of the social service workforce in Thailand covered all levels—professional, paraprofessional, and volunteers - encompassing both government and non-government sectors. The Global Social Service Workforce Alliance (GSSWA) describes the social service workforce as consisting of both paid and unpaid individuals, including governmental and non-governmental workers, professionals, and paraprofessionals, who are dedicated to promoting the healthy development and welfare of children and families. This workforce is engaged in preventive, responsive, and promotive programmes aimed at supporting families and children in communities by alleviating poverty, reducing discrimination, enhancing access to services, championing social justice, and addressing issues related to violence, abuse, exploitation, neglect, and family separation (GSSWA & UNICEF 2019). This nationwide study explored not only the current capacities of the workforce but also critical gaps that hinder the effective delivery of social services.

Social work is a vital profession with a long-standing presence in Thailand, dating back to 1942, with the establishment of formal academic programs in 1954 (Thammasat University 2025). The Social Work Profession Act, enacted in 2013 (RTG 2013) marked a significant advancement by formally recognizing social work as a regulated profession, mandating licensure and adherence to ethical standards. Despite this legal recognition, the number of qualified, licensed social workers has not kept pace with the growing complexity and volume of social challenges. As of November 2024, Thailand had only 3,351 licensed social workers (Social Work Professional Council 2024), equivalent to 5.07 per 100,000 population, far below international benchmarks such as Cambodia's target of 33 per 100,000, Malaysia's target of 25 per 100,000 and the United States' ratio of over 200 per 100,000 (ASEAN 2023a). In response to this shortfall, Thailand increasingly relies on a broader social service workforce, including paraprofessionals and volunteers, to fulfil essential social welfare functions.

Thailand's legal and policy frameworks influence the social service workforce. The decentralization policy, launched with the 1997 and 2007 Constitutions and reinforced by the 1999 Determining Plan and Process of Decentralization to Local Government Organization Act (Decentralization Act), the 1999 Local Personal Administration Act, and the Ministry of Interior's regulations on local administration, has empowered Local Administrative Organizations (LAOs) to assume greater responsibility in providing public services (Sriram 2019). While this policy marks a progressive step toward local governance, its implementation remains challenged by the complex, cross-sectoral nature of social services, ambiguous role definitions between central and local authorities, and persistent underinvestment in local human resources and infrastructure. Addressing these challenges requires more explicit measures, strengthened intergovernmental coordination, and **sustained investment in local workforce development to fully realize the potential of decentralization and improve service delivery at the community level.**

Key legislative instruments, such as the Social Welfare Promotion Act of 2003 (RTG 2003) and the Social Work Profession Act of 2013, provide the foundation for professional standards and service provision. In addition, the 13th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023–2027) emphasizes the need for equitable access to social services for vulnerable populations. Nonetheless, persistent gaps in planning,

developing, and supporting the social service workforce remain in policy enforcement, inter-agency coordination, and alignment between educational qualifications and workforce needs (NESDC 2023).

Regional experiences further underscore the importance of clearly defining the scope of the “social service workforce” and establishing standardized staffing ratios. The Ha Noi Declaration on Strengthening Social Work towards a Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN Community and accompanying Road Map set specific, measurable, time-bound objectives for ASEAN Member States, including Thailand, to fulfil (ASEAN 2023). Global evidence suggests that systems with professionalized, registered, and well-supported workforces demonstrate greater sustainability and public trust (GSSWA & UNICEF 2019). This assessment seeks to address Thailand’s social service workforce strengths and gaps by contributing to a more coherent understanding of social service workforce composition, professional roles, and implications for service delivery, as well as public finance management challenges.

Methodology

This assessment employed a mixed-method approach to generate a comprehensive understanding of the social service workforce in Thailand during January 2024 - July 2025. A Task Group, (comprising representatives from government agencies like Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, the Royal Thai Police, and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, along with their participating subordinate agencies, non-profit organizations, and six educational institutions) was convened over the period of October 2024 - January 2025 to provide contextual insights and guide the study’s direction (Full list of Agencies participating in the Task Group are in Annex E). The document and research tools were reviewed by UNICEF Thailand and UNICEF EAPRO.

The methodology included desk reviews of both national and international sources, in-depth interviews with 13 experts, and focus group discussions with service providers to explore practical challenges and emerging needs. Administrative surveys were conducted with responses from nine (9) Government employers, six (6) Academic institutions, four (4) Professional organisations, and 81 Public benefit organizations; while over 700 entries through an online survey captured the perspectives of social service workers at different levels (Full list of Methodology in Annex D). Data collection tools were adapted from the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance’s frameworks, (GSSWA 2019) and the analysis integrated both qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure depth and rigor. In addition, two (2) case studies are presented on the notable practices in social service workforce planning and development, both centralized and decentralized government structures.

Key Findings

The assessment revealed several findings. The full list of findings is provided at the end of this document under the findings and recommendations section. Below are selected key findings:

Lack of a unified definition and fragmentation of roles and standards weaken workforce coordination:

Thailand has a solid legal framework for social service workforce planning, including the Social Welfare Promotion Act 2003 which can be a framework for building a social welfare system and planning for workforce; and the Social Work Profession Act 2013 which has enhanced the credibility and laid the foundation for professional work. However, Thailand currently lacks a unified, nationally recognized definition of the social service workforce, leading to overlapping roles, fragmented coordination, and inconsistent service delivery. The workforce includes a broad spectrum of professionals, paraprofessionals, and volunteers, each with varying qualifications, training, and responsibilities.

Although Thailand stands out in ASEAN as a country that has strengthened the licensing and registration system for **social workers** following the Social Worker Profession Act; limited enforcement, and the unresolved qualification framework for social worker positions across various agencies have led to inconsistent workforce standards, ratios, and planning within Thailand.

Severe shortage, geographic disparities in the number of licensed social workers undermine service capacity in Thailand: Thailand has a severe shortage of licensed or formally trained and professional social workers, particularly in the public sector. The absence of systematic workforce analysis and nationally standardized social worker-to-population ratios presents challenges in equitable service delivery.

As of November 2024, Thailand had only 4,492 registered social workers, 3,351 of which are licensed social workers (Social Work Professional Council 2024) which equates to around 5.00 per 100,000 population (National Statistical Office 2024). This figure is significantly below regional and international benchmarks. Almost 90% of licensed social workers are employed in the public sector, with 77% working primarily at central agencies and only 23% serving Local Administrative Organizations. When measured per 100,000 people, Bangkok has 12.25 licensed social workers, whereas other parts of the country have only 1–2.5 licensed social workers, reflecting significant geographic disparity that restrict access to services in rural and underserved areas (UNICEF & Thammasat University 2017).

Professional social service workers: In addition to social workers, the agency survey indicates that central government positions that can be considered as professional social service workers include Social Development Workers (MSDHS), Child Welfare Protection Officers (MSDHS), Probation Officers (MOJ), and Labour Specialists (MOL). In local government, relevant position includes Community Development Specialist. Overall, there are approximately 8,570 professional social service workers (excluding social workers) nationwide. The findings also indicate that agencies experiencing shortages of social workers, sometime assign related professionals, such as nurses and psychologists, to carry out social work functions as deemed necessary.

Paraprofessional social service workers have critical roles in filling gaps where there is a shortage of professionals. However, they are not formally defined in terms of qualifications and scope of work in the Act. The agency survey indicates that positions that can be initially identified in the public sector include Social Development Officers (MSDHS) and Community Development Officers (Local Administrative Organizations), which only accounted for 302 position in total.

The workforce gap limits social welfare effectiveness leading to a reliance on **volunteers** for community-level services not covered by professional and paraprofessional workers. Thailand has 387,200 Social Development and Human Security Volunteers (SDHSV), who along with other local volunteer groups, strengthen the social service system. Their impact depends on clear roles and responsibilities, matching user needs and risks, and adequate supervision.

This study indicates clear shortages of professional and paraprofessional practitioners and an urban-heavy workforce, leaving rural and remote areas dependent on volunteers. Higher education and licensing has direct correlation with better performance. To addressing these gaps, workforce planning should prioritises geographic equity, particularly for rural areas, along with robust supervision and governance to ensure quality and accountability.

Fiscal constraints undermine workforce stability and growth in Thailand's social services: Thailand's social services budget in B.E. 2568 (2025) is approximately 2.14% of GDP, far below the average government expenditure on social protection in high-income countries (16.4% of GDP) and globally (12.8% of GDP). This highlights a substantial fiscal gap for Thailand.

Current government budget policies and controls designed to reduce long-term fiscal burdens, such as limiting the number of civil service positions, overall employment freezing policy, and capping personnel expenditures for LAOs at 40% of their total budget, significantly affect the ability to recruit and retain social service workers. These policies hinder effective workforce planning, make it challenging to adjust staffing levels to meet growing needs, and limit the provision of adequate resources, compensation, welfare benefits, and training opportunities. The study also reflects the substantial influence of public employment arrangements on job security and worker motivation, factors which are being considered highly important by practitioners.

Mismatch between social work education, training, local needs, and practice in Thailand's social service sector: Although Thailand has a long history of social work education that places strong emphasis on field practice (all social work curriculums require at least 800 hours), and requires continuing professional education credits to renew license every five (5) years; there are still significant gaps in aligning this education and training with the requirements of the social service sector. Access to continuous professional development is uneven, particularly

for contract-based workers. Furthermore, despite six academic institutions producing approximately 500 social work graduates each year, there is no effective mechanism to ensure that these graduates successfully transition into the social service workforce. Consequently, only a small percentage of graduates apply for membership with the Social Work Professions Council or secure professional licensure, despite the existence of civil service positions that could accommodate them. Additionally, with the decentralisation of social functions to more than 7,850 local administrative organisations nationwide, the current capacity of higher education institutions to adequately supply trained graduates may not meet local service demands.

The substantial diversity in educational backgrounds of other social service workforces that do not require specific degree— both professional and paraprofessional— has limited the feasibility for standardised pre-service training. Accordingly, emphasis may need to be placed on in-service training provided by employing agencies.

Inadequate support and high demands undermine social service workers' well-being and service quality: Social service workers face numerous challenges, including heavy workloads, limited resources, and insufficient compensation. Some agencies provide financial incentives for those holding a social work professional licence, which reflects recognition and helps retain specialised practitioners within the organization. Career advancement remains constrained; for example, social workers in some organisations must shift to non social worker position in order to being promoted into management positions. Supervision and support mechanisms vary across agencies and sectors. Nearly 20% of social service workers report having no supervisor, while about 18% of those who have supervisors report that supervision does not help them learn best practices for service users or for their work, inevitably affects workers well-being and service quality.

While social workers have professional organisations that clearly support and promote social work practice, particularly with respect to service standards and ethics, other professional social service workers (except community development specialists, who are supported by the Community Development Club of Local Administrative Organisations of Thailand) do not have professional organisation to provide such support. For paraprofessional social service workers, while having critical role in serving the public, they remain outside formal professional structures, both in terms of licensing and participation in professional organisations/associations, creating structural barriers to professional development and reflecting a lack of appropriate pathways to progress into professional social service practice.

Key Recommendations

Based on the key findings, the following recommendations are provided; a full list is provided at the end of the document.

Workforce Planning

- 1. Central-level analysis of the overall social service workforce:** Develop **a common definition and national standards for Thailand's social service workforce** under the leadership of the National Social Welfare Promotion Committee, with technical support from the Social Work Professional Council. This definition must encompass professional social workers, professional social service workforces, paraprofessionals, and volunteers, clearly outline their roles, and establish competency standards across sectors to guide the development of job descriptions, training, supervision, and staffing determination across levels of administration.

This should include **revisiting mechanisms under the Social Welfare Promotion Act** to ensure its alignment with the new definition; **developing a National Social Service Workforce Information System;** **developing local-level workforce assessment guideline;** **setting mandate minimum staffing ratios at each level of administration** (with reference to ASEAN and international approaches), as well as **integrating social service workforce planning into decentralisation framework, and strengthening partnerships among educational institutions that produce social service practitioners.**

- 2. Reducing budgetary and workforce policy constraints: To address the shortage of qualified social workers and improve service delivery,** Thailand should promote inter-ministerial coordination, potentially involving MSDHS, MoI, OCSC, and the Ministry of Finance, to prioritise essential social service positions, and consider exempting these roles from current hiring restrictions to meet the population's growing needs. Review successful case studies of increasing the social service workforce, such as those of the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration. (in **Annex K**)

This should also include **integrating social service workforce priorities into national civil service planning; facilitating inter-ministerial coordination to prioritise critical roles; reviewing and adjusting budgetary regulations for human resources; establishing conditional budget allocation mechanisms (earmarked); promoting integrated workforce planning tools for local use (supporting local administrative organisations with context-appropriate tools and guidance to ensure alignment of staffing with local service needs; see examples in Table 39); institutionalizing fiscal impact assessments in workforce planning; and addressing the local needs of the professional social service workforce.**

Workforce Development

- 3. Address shortages of qualified and sufficient personnel through strengthened pre-service and in-service training pipelines:** Professional bodies should work closely with academic institutions and employing agencies on pre-service training by update curricula, strengthen practical training including internships, and incorporate cultural competencies relevant to diverse and remote communities, and provide targeted, flexible in-service training for social workers, other professional social service practitioners, paraprofessionals, and volunteers for all employment types, with content tailored to specific roles and regional contexts.

In addition, actions should be taken to **align job assignments with professional qualifications; formalise and systematically support the roles of paraprofessionals and volunteers; provide incentives for professional credentialing; develop a central registry of social service practitioners and volunteers; strengthen collaboration between educational institutions and professional organizations to advance workforce development; and explore the feasibility of outsourcing certain tasks to non-governmental organisations and public benefit organisations** (specifying which functions are suitable for outsourcing, and the support and monitoring systems required).

- 4. Transition of social work graduates into the labour market through establishment of graduate-to-workforce transition pathways:** The OCSC, MOI and MSDHS should support the development of structured entry pathways—such as paid internships, graduate placement programs, and study leave opportunities in public agencies—to facilitate smooth transitions into the workforce.

In addition, efforts should be made to **improve coordination between education and workforce planning; promote professional licensure and membership; expand graduate preparation for local service roles** (to support decentralisation and the transfer of social service responsibilities to local administrative organisations), and to **monitor and track graduate outcomes.**

Workforce Support

- 5. Establish functioning systems and mechanisms to support each group of social service practitioners:** Regular workforce assessments should be conducted to inform planning and ensure adequate resource allocation, including **guaranteeing equitable access to in-service professional development across all employment types**, with support tailored to the roles and responsibilities of each group.

In addition, **establish a national governance framework and assessment system for workforce classification and support; expand inclusive and tailored support systems for all workforce categories; establish clear and progressive career pathways for social service workforce; develop and disseminate clear operation manuals; strengthen and standardize the supervision systems for social service workers; and enhancing the recognition of social service workers.**

List of Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations	MoE	Ministry of Education
AMS	ASEAN Member State	MoJ	Ministry of Justice
BMA	Bangkok Metropolitan Administration	MoI	Ministry of Interior
BPHV	Bangkok's Public Health Volunteers	MoL	Ministry of Labour
CDV	Civil Defence Volunteers	MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
CTG	Country Task Group	MHESI	Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation
CPCR	The Center for the Protection of Children's Rights Foundation	MSDHS	Ministry of Social Development and Human Security
CPSS	Child Protection Systems Strengthening	NESDC	National Economic and Social Development Council
DLA	Department of Local Administration	NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
DSWD	The Department of Social Welfare and Development	OCSC	The Office of Civil Office Service Commission
EGD	Focus Group Discussion	OSW	Office of Social Welfare Promotion
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent	PBOs	Public Benefit Organizations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	RTP	Royal Thai Police
GEC	Government Employee Commission	SDHSV	Social Development and Human Security Volunteer
GSSWA	The Global Social Service Workforce Alliance	SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
HRIS	Human Resources Information System	SSW	Social Service Workforce
IDI	In-depth Interview	SWPC	Social Work Professions Council of Thailand
IFSW	International Federation of Social Workers	TASW	Thailand Association of Social Workers
LAO	Local Administrative Organization	TASWE	Thailand Association of Social Welfare and Social Work Education
LSW	Licensed Social Worker	U.S.A.	The United States of America
MAMPU	Malaysian Administrative Modernization & Management Planning Unit	VHV	Village health volunteers
MoD	Ministry of Defense		

Glossary:

- 1. Allied Professionals:** Defined in the study as professionals or assistant professionals involved in sectors such as education, health, or justice, who may perform social service functions even if their primary role is not directly related to social services. Survey data indicated that many interdisciplinary professionals identify with social service functions.
- 2. Bangkok Metropolitan Administration Volunteers:** Included in the preliminary estimation of the volunteer workforce in social service–related activities in Bangkok. These volunteers work under the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) and are directly engaged in delivering social services in the city. Examples include volunteers working with children and youth, volunteers at the Coordination Center and Assistance for Homeless People, and volunteer social development officers.
- 3. Ha Noi Declaration on Strengthening Social Work Towards Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN Community:** This Declaration was adopted by the Heads of ASEAN Member States on 12 November 2020 at the 37th ASEAN Summit. It provided the first regional framework for social work, calling for its professionalization and expansion in the region. The Declaration sets a clear vision for empowering peoples of ASEAN through building comprehensive social work and delivering multidisciplinary, inclusive and quality social services. It includes eleven pillars, of equal importance, which together provide a holistic and systemic approach to workforce strengthening in ASEAN.
- 4. Licensed social work practitioner:** As per the Social Work Professional Act, B.E. 2556 (2013), it means a person who has registered and received a license as a licensed social work practitioner from the Social Work Professional Council. This can also be called a professional social worker, as defined under the Social Work Professional Act, B.E. 2556 (2013), defined in the study as individuals with university degrees in relevant fields. In the context of the study's classification, they refer to individuals identified explicitly as social workers by surveyed government agencies, often licensed social workers. They require in-depth assessment, diagnostic skills, and intervention skills. They work under the supervision of licensed social work practitioners. Educational qualifications and a social work professional license are statistically significantly related to perceived competency in specific practice areas.
- 5. Licensed social work profession:** As per the Social Work Professional Act, B.E. 2556 (2013), it means a social work profession that must be registered and licensed by the Social Work Professional Council.
- 6. Recipient:** As defined in the Social Welfare Promotion Act, B.E. 2546 (2003), it is defined as a person or a group of persons suffering from hardship conditions or in need of help. Examples provided include a child, youth, elder, indigent, disabled or handicapped person, underprivileged, sexually harassed person, or other groups determined by the National Committee.
- 7. Social Development and Human Security Volunteers:** Their primary duties involve targeting and monitoring, providing initial assistance, and referring to relevant agencies. These duties are linked to both national and local levels. Specific training via video clips and an assessment are required to become officially registered SDHS Volunteers. They were included in the preliminary estimation of the volunteer workforce in social service–related activities.

8. **Social service paraprofessional workers:** Categorized as a level within the social service workforce. Defined in this study as individuals who support professional social service workers and in delivering social services and play a key role in delivering services at the community level. The assessment proposed including social worker assistants, social development officers, community development officers, and other workers with roles at the primary level as paraprofessionals. A benchmark of 300 paraprofessional workers per 100,000 population is suggested. They require basic assessment skills, coordination skills for referrals, and problem-solving skills. They work under the guidance of a social worker practitioner or licensed social work practitioner.
9. **Social service professional workers:** those in social services workforce that typically have a relevant secondary to higher-level qualification.
10. **Social service workforce (SSW):** A broad group encompassing professionals, paraprofessionals, and volunteers across both government and non-government sectors. Systems with professionalized, registered, and well-supported workforces demonstrate greater sustainability and public trust. Thailand currently lacks a unified, nationally recognized definition. The definition used in this study was developed based on relevant literature, GSSWA and UNICEF guidelines, and Task Group input. The study broadly defines a wide range of professional and paraprofessional workers in government and private sectors involved in the integrated promotion, development, prevention, resolution, and rehabilitation of problems, as well as in promoting social stability and well-being. International experiences suggest the importance of a clear, nationally accepted definition.
11. **Social welfare:** The Social Welfare Promotion Act of 2003 defines social welfare as a social service system related to the prevention, resolution, development, and promotion of social security. This system aims to fulfil fundamental needs like education, health, accommodation, occupation and earning, leisure, justice, and general social services. The goal is to enhance people's quality of life based on self-reliance to meet determined standards thoroughly, appropriately, and fairly, while respecting human dignity, deserved rights, and participation in social welfare provision at all levels.
12. **Social Welfare Promotion Act B.E. 2546 (2003):** Relevant law mentioned in relation to stakeholder responsibilities. It provides a definition of "Social worker". Public benefit organizations can register under this act.
13. **Social welfare provision:** means providing social welfare services per the standard determined by the National Committee under the Social Welfare Promotion Act, B.E. 2546 (2003).
14. **Social work:** This term is not formally defined in the Social Work Profession Act itself, leading to ambiguity in practice and licensing in Thailand. Overall, for this study, social work is acknowledged as an essential part of social welfare. It is defined as a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion and participation, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, gender responsiveness, cultural sensitivity, collective responsibility and respect for diversity are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. It is considered the leading and core profession in the social service workforce.
15. **Social worker:** According to the Social Welfare Promotion Act, B.E. 2546 (2003), a social worker is defined as a person performing social welfare provision who holds at least a Bachelor's degree in social work, has completed the social work training course under the standard determined under this act, or has qualifications notified by the Committee in the Government Gazette.

- 16. Social work practitioner:** As per the Social Work Professional Act, B.E. 2556 (2013), a social work practitioner is a person who practices a profession requiring knowledge and skills in social work to perform duties related to the prevention and resolution of problems concerning individuals, families, groups of people, or communities so that they can perform their social functions and live normal lives.
- 17. Social work profession:** As per the Social Work Professional Act, B.E. 2556 (2013), it means a profession requiring knowledge and skills in social work to perform duties related to the prevention and resolution of problems concerning individuals, families, groups of people, or communities so that they can perform their social functions and live normal lives.
- 18. Social Work Profession Act B.E. 2556 (2013):** A significant legal milestone for strengthening the social work profession. Established the Social Work Council, which has the power to certify degrees for licensing purposes. It also mandates the accumulation of training credits for license renewal. Licensing is mandated under this act.
- 19. Social Work Professions Council:** The main professional organization with legal authority, established under the Social Work Profession Act of 2013. Its duties include certifying degrees and regulating professional development through training credit requirements. It is involved in supervising licensing and professional development for social workers.
- 20. Task Group:** A group convened for this assessment comprising representatives from government agencies, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions. Played a critical role in contextualizing and co-defining the scope of the social service workforce, facilitating data collection, reviewing findings, and formulating recommendations. Discussed and agreed upon the operational definition of social service workers for the study.
- 21. Volunteers:** As per the Social Welfare Promotion Act, B.E. 2546 (2003), a volunteer means a person who voluntarily performs social welfare provision in a social welfare organization. Defined in this study as individuals who volunteer time and skills without regular compensation. In Thailand, they assist in promoting health and social well-being, collecting data, and linking community members with professional services. Examples include Village Health Volunteers (VHV), Bangkok's Public Health Volunteers (BPHV), and Civil Defence Volunteers (CDV). SDHSVs and BMAVs were included in the preliminary estimation. They require basic social work skills, communication skills, initial assistance and referral coordination, and networking skills. They work under the guidance or supervision of professional or paraprofessional practitioners

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1

Introduction

1.1 Background

Thailand has been actively engaged in professionalizing its social service workforce. These efforts align with regional initiatives such as the 2020 Ha Noi Declaration on Strengthening Social Work Towards a Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN Community, its road map and associated guidelines, which highlight the strengthening of social work and outlines essential steps for ASEAN Member States for enhancing the social service workforce, including developing legislation to define roles and standardizing accreditation systems.

The social work profession is critical to the broader social services workforce, encompassing various roles, skills, and competencies across countries. Over the past few decades, social work has become a well-established profession in more than 100 countries. However, in many contexts, social service individuals still identify as 'social workers' despite lacking formal certification, training, or licensure (UNICEF, 2019).

In Thailand, social work education and practice have a legacy of over 70 years. The country's formal journey began in 1942 with the introduction of a 15-month certificate program by the National Council of Cultural Affairs. A significant milestone occurred in 1954 with the establishment of the Faculty of Social Administration at Thammasat University—the first public institution to offer a degree in social work (Thammasat University 2025). Despite its longstanding academic foundation, social work gained legal recognition a little later.

Key national legislation in Thailand provides a legal foundation for social work practice and its regulation. The Social Welfare Promotion Act 2003 established a framework for social welfare provision, recognizing the crucial role of social workers in implementing its provisions. An important milestone was the passage of the Social Work Profession Act 2013, which formally recognizes social work as a profession and created the Social Work Professions Council (SWPC) to represent and regulate the profession. SWPC serves as the central regulatory authority, overseeing the profession by setting standards for professional qualifications and conduct, and managing the registration and licensing of social workers.

Thailand's law specifically defines certain duties as a "licensed social work profession," requiring a license from the SWPC for practice, particularly under specified laws such as the Criminal Procedure Code and Social Welfare Promotion Act. In 2019, Regulation of the Social Work Professional Council regarding the Code of Ethics for the Social Work Profession was published in the Gazette, reinforcing the commitment to ethical practice (Social Work Professional Council 2019).

Despite the passage of the key laws and the introduction of social work programmes at educational institutions, the demand for qualified, licensed social workers continues to outpace supply, particularly in areas serving vulnerable populations, including children, women, people with disabilities and the elderly. This shortage presents a major challenge in responding to growing social needs and delivering timely, quality interventions. Specific roles, such as those involved in child protection case managers requiring conducting best interest assessment for case where children either needs to be separated from families or placed base din families, child victims, witnesses, crime and those accused of committing crime, women victims and survivors of sexual and gender based violence, children identified at risk of abuse, exploitation and violence by paraprofessional and volunteers etc. All these roles require specialized training or legal qualifications.

As of November 2024, there are only 3,351 licensed social workers, equating to just 5.00 per 100,000 population (National Statistical Office 2024), a figure that is drastically lower than regional and global peers (Social Work Professional Council 2024). The distribution is also uneven, with a concentration in central provinces, leading to service gaps and delays in care, especially in underserved regions.

Due to the limited number of licensed social workers, Thailand relies heavily on a broader social services workforce. This includes professionals with degrees in social sciences, such as social development or community development officers, and "para-social workers" who carry out specified tasks. Community volunteers, trained by agencies like the MSDH or the MoPH, also play a vital role. These volunteers assist in promoting health and social well-being, collecting data, and linking community members with professional services.

Nevertheless, the broader social services workforce remains insufficiently defined or analyzed despite its significance. A comprehensive review is urgently needed to identify key actors, their qualifications, and their roles. A systematic understanding of the workforce will provide the foundation for developing evidence-based strategies to enhance capacity in the short, medium, and long term.

1.2 Main objective

The primary goal of this assessment is to analyse the Thai social service workforce at the central, regional, provincial, and local administrative levels, encompassing government and non-government entities, as well as other relevant stakeholders. This assessment evaluates current human, financial, and technical capacities, identifying strengths, potential gaps, and bottlenecks that affect stakeholders' ability to meet their responsibilities. This evaluation considers various laws, including the Social Welfare Promotion Act 2003, Child Protection Act 2003, Victims of Domestic Violence Victim Protection Act 2007, Mental Health Act 2008, Juvenile and Family Court and Case Procedure Act 2010, and the Thai Criminal Procedure Code 1934, all of which pertain to social welfare and the protection of vulnerable populations at the central, regional, and local administrative levels.

Furthermore, this assessment identifies opportunities for targeted strategies to address current resource capacity challenges and formulates recommendations to enhance the social service sector's human, financial, and human resource capacity. This aims to improve management, supervision, and performance in coordinating national plans and delivering crucial interventions at national, regional, and sub-district levels. For the Specific objectives of this assessment, the Conceptual framework, and assessment questions, see **Annex A** and **Annex B**.



2

Literature, legal and policy framework review

This analysis examines the legal and policy frameworks relevant to the social service workforce in Thailand, alongside international experiences in defining various categories within the social service workforce and in determining workforce-to-population ratios. These insights serve to inform and contextualise the current assessment. For a more detailed literature review, see **Annex C**.

2.1 Legal and policy frameworks related to the Social Service Workforce in Thailand

Thailand's legal and policy frameworks play a pivotal role in shaping the assessment and development of the social service workforce. A key aspect is the country's ongoing decentralization policy, which was initiated by the 1997 Constitution and reinforced in subsequent constitutions, including the 2017 version. These laws mandate the transfer of public service delivery responsibilities to 7,850 LAOs. However, despite strategic action plans promoting decentralization since 2002, the transfer of social service responsibilities remains limited. This is attributed to complex factors such as the sensitive nature of social services, unclear roles between central and local agencies, overlapping mandates, and chronic underfunding and staff shortages at the local level. These gaps hinder the effective implementation and assessment of social services nationwide.

Social workers in Thailand have a specified role and are responsible for numerous statutes, including the Child Protection Act 2003, Victims of Domestic Violence Protection Act 2007, Mental Health Act 2008, and Juvenile and Family Court and Juvenile and Family Case Procedure Act 2010, as outlined in Section 28 of the Social Work Profession Act.

The Social Welfare Promotion Act of 2003, as amended in 2007, provides the legal foundation for social welfare services in Thailand. It promotes collaborative engagement among state agencies, civil society, and community organizations to deliver social welfare services. The Act defines key stakeholders such as service recipients, volunteers, and welfare organizations and emphasizes the importance of integrated community welfare systems. By establishing the National Social Welfare Promotion Commission, the law promotes a coordinated, comprehensive delivery system. This institutional structure supports the inclusion of diverse sectors in the delivery of welfare services, which is critical for assessing workforce capacities and identifying areas for development.

The 13th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023–2027) underscores the need to enhance services for vulnerable populations through economic empowerment, skills training, and access to health and education. It encourages job creation through local enterprises, vocational programs, and community engagement. Although the plan does not specifically mention social service workers, it emphasizes the importance of skilled professionals implementing these measures. The plan's focus on legal assistance, psychological support, and community involvement underscores the growing demand for a competent and well-supported social service workforce capable of responding to diverse societal needs (NESDC 2023).

The Social Work Profession Act 2013 is a significant milestone in professionalizing social work in Thailand. The act defines “social work profession”, social work practitioners”, and licensed social work practitioners, leading to a clearer scope of practice and expected qualifications of social work practitioners. The Act introduces mandatory registration and licensing for social workers and established the Social Work Professions Council to oversee the standardization of the profession. The Act requires licensed social work practitioners to meet specific educational and training criteria, adhere to a code of ethics, and fulfil the requirements for license renewal. This legal framework supports the systematic development of the workforce by ensuring that social workers possess verified qualifications and professional competencies. Nonetheless, enforcement remains inconsistent, as many public agencies do not require a license to practice due to broad qualification standards set by the OCSC.

Professional ethics and accountability are essential components of workforce quality, as highlighted in the Act's provisions on ethics. The Social Work Professions Council published The Code of Ethics for Social Work Professionals in 2019 and established procedures for managing ethical complaints and violations in 2020 (Social Work Professional Council 2019). This Code outlines the principles and standards expected of social work practitioners. It emphasizes the importance of respecting human rights, dignity, and social justice as core values of the profession. The Code, developed in accordance with the Social Work Professionals Act 2013, provides guidelines for ethical conduct across various professional contexts, including responsibilities towards clients, the profession, colleagues, organizations, and society.

The Thai code of ethics for the social work profession aims to align with the values, principles, and standards of practice from the IFSW Statement of Ethical Principles, 2001 (IFSW 2014), and the ASEAN Social Work Ethics (ASEAN Social Work Consortium 2015). By institutionalizing professional accountability, the system fosters public trust and reinforces the credibility of the social work profession.

Since the enactment of the Social Work Profession Act, the number of licensed practitioners has grown, particularly during the initial implementation phase. However, this growth has since slowed due to a lack of systemic enforcement and incentives. While some agencies offer additional benefits for licensed social workers, such recognition is not widespread. Moreover, the criteria for employment under OCSC guidelines allow non-social work graduates to fill social work positions, diluting the professional identity of the workforce and affecting the consistency of service quality. These issues highlight the need for stronger policy enforcement and clearer professional standards to enhance workforce planning, development, and support.



Thailand has developed a comprehensive legal and policy infrastructure to support the social service workforce. However, a regional assessment conducted in 2019 on the Social Service Workforce in East Asia and Pacific region noted that while national strategies like the National Strategy on Child Protection (2017–2021) and the Social Welfare Provision Strategic Plan No. 3 (2017–2021) aim to strengthen the workforce, challenges remain on accelerating implementation of existing laws and strategies, improving training standards, and reforming out-of-home care (GSSWA and UNICEF EAPRO 2019).

The report outlines key considerations for Thailand, including the recent recognition and licensing of social workers, the lack of clear role definitions for different worker levels, the unknown total size of the workforce which hinders planning, the need to emphasize professional licensing, improve service quality, supervision, and monitoring, and promote awareness of the profession (GSSWA and UNICEF EAPRO 2019). A more unified approach that strengthens licensing enforcement, aligns educational qualifications with workforce needs, and ensures resource allocation will be essential to enhancing the capacity, quality, and sustainability of social services nationwide.

2.2 International, regional experiences and implications for SSW in Thailand

International and regional experiences offer crucial insights into how countries define, plan, and regulate the social service workforce, which can directly inform efforts to assess and strengthen the workforce in Thailand. One of the central lessons drawn from global and regional practice is the importance of a clear, nationally accepted definition of the SSW, which remains a significant gap in Thailand's system

2.2.1. Aligning the definition of the SSW

Thailand's efforts to define and strengthen its SSW must be understood within the broader context of regional commitments under the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 (ASEAN 2015) and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025 (ASEAN 2016), which emphasize a people-oriented, people-centred ASEAN. These frameworks call for equitable access to social welfare and inclusive development. Notably, Thailand is a signatory to the Ha Noi Declaration on Strengthening Social Work Towards Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN Community (ASEAN 2020), which recognizes social work as a vital component of social welfare systems and calls for a holistic, multi-sectoral approach to workforce development.

The ASEAN Road Map for the Implementation of the Ha Noi Declaration (2021–2030) operationalizes this vision (ASEAN 2023). It explicitly identifies the need for defining key terms—including the Social Service Workforce, social work professionals, paraprofessionals, and volunteers—as foundational to effective planning and implementation. The Road Map emphasizes that while national definitions should reflect local contexts and legal frameworks, they should also be guided by ASEAN-level definitions to promote regional harmonization and professional recognition. The ASEAN framework above is guided by the social work definitions provided by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW 2014) and the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance (GSSWA 2019).

The SSW is a broad group of professionals and paraprofessionals who provide preventive, promotive, and responsive services to vulnerable populations. SSW is defined to include social workers, case managers, youth workers, and others operating in child protection, family support, and community development (GSSWA & UNICEF 2019). These professionals are expected to uphold ethical values, promote human rights, and deliver services grounded in social science principles. Globally, countries have approached the definition and structuring of the SSW in diverse ways. For example:

In the **European Union (EU)**, workforce composition is shaped by government investment, welfare models, and population needs. There is no single EU definition for the SSW that applies rigidly across all member states, as each country has its own national legislation and professional standards. A 2017 study found that the structures and legislative frameworks of EU member states influence the size, composition, and regulation of the social services workforce. The lack of mutual recognition of social work and social care qualifications across the EU often complicates employment in other Member States and requires lengthy recognition procedures. In general, the roles of social workers and other professionals working in social services in the EU revolve around assessment, multi-agency working, liaising with other professionals, reducing and managing social risks for individuals and families, and case management (Alfonso Lara Montero 2017)

Similarly, the **United States** identifies a core workforce under the Department of Health and Human Services. However, it faces an impending shortage of social workers by 2030, driving advocacy for mandatory professional registration (GSSWA & UNICEF 2019). These trends suggest that **professionalization and registration** are critical levers for system sustainability and public trust.

In **East Asia and the Pacific**, definitions and roles vary widely. For instance, the **Philippines** broadly defines “social services.” Social service workers operate across various sectors, including social welfare, social protection, child protection, education, disaster response, health, and justice. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has historically played a crucial role in shaping the country’s social work practice and policies. The regulatory body for social work in the Philippines is the Professional Regulatory Board for Social Workers (PRBSW). Social workers in the Philippines are essential in addressing social issues, supporting vulnerable populations, and promoting social justice (UNICEF Malaysia 2025).

Malaysia, although progressing with legal recognition of social work through a forthcoming Social Work Professions Bill, still lacks a statutory definition (GSSWA and UNICEF EAPRO 2019). The Bill, in development since 2010, aims to recognize social work as a profession and typically includes definitions of “social work” and “social worker.” At this stage, Malaysia is facing issues like an absence of qualified professionals, unregulated practice where anyone can call themselves a social worker without legitimate qualifications, and misconceptions about the role, often confusing it with charity (UNICEF Malaysia 2025).

These examples reveal that Thailand must urgently establish clear, contextualised definitions of the Social Service Workforce by amending relevant laws, distinguishing between professional social workers, paraprofessionals (assistant social workers), allied professionals, and volunteers, while aligning with ASEAN and global frameworks. Currently, different roles are often used interchangeably, leading to confusion, inefficiencies, and unclear roles. This ambiguity hampers effective service delivery and coordination across key ministries, including the MSDHS, MoPH, MoJ and MoI. A nationally accepted definition codified in the Social Work Professional Act, informed by ASEAN Road Map guidance, is essential for strengthening Thailand’s workforce planning and policy development and enabling coherent, multi-sectoral implementation of social services.

2.2.2. Workforce Ratios and Planning

Another key insight from global and regional practice is the strategic use of standardized social worker-to-population ratios to inform workforce planning. The ASEAN Regional Guidance on Population-Ratios emphasizes that while there is no single optimal ratio applicable to all contexts, setting nationally contextualized minimum ratios is essential for identifying workforce gaps, advocating for investment, and ensuring equitable access to quality social services (ASEAN 2023a). These ratios serve as critical benchmarks for planning, budgeting, and policy development, particularly in countries with emerging or fragmented social service systems.

Several ASEAN Member States (AMS) have already adopted or proposed such benchmarks. For instance, Cambodia aims for 33 social service providers per 100,000 population, and Malaysia estimates a ratio of 25 per 100,000 population (ASEAN 2023). In contrast, the United States maintains a significantly higher ratio—over 200 licensed social workers per 100,000 population—highlighting the scale of investment required to meet complex social needs.



In comparison, Thailand has not yet established a national workforce ratio, which represents a major planning gap. As of November 2024, there are only 3,351 licensed social workers, equating to just 5.00 per 100,000 population (National Statistical Office 2024), a figure that is drastically lower than regional and global peers (Social Work Professional Council 2024). For context, Malaysia has 11 social workers per 100,000 population, Singapore has 29, and Australia has 96.15 per 100,000 population (UNICEF Malaysia 2024). Moreover, 96% of Thailand's licensed social workers are concentrated in central agencies, with only 4% deployed in local government, creating significant geographic imbalances and limited access to services in rural and underserved areas (UNICEF & Thammasat University 2017).

This underscores the importance of decentralized workforce planning to ensure equitable access to services in underserved regions. The ASEAN Guidance (ASEAN 2023a) underscores that such disparities can only be addressed through decentralized workforce planning, informed by population needs, service mandates, and contextual factors such as geography and poverty levels. It recommends a step-by-step approach to defining and calculating ratios, beginning with a clear national definition of the SSW, mapping current workforce capacity, and identifying service needs. Without these foundational steps, Thailand's ability to cost, plan, and advocate for workforce expansion will remain constrained, especially in light of its ageing population and increasing social complexity.

3

Approaches and Methodology

A structured and collaborative approach was adopted to comprehensively assess the social service workforce in Thailand and identify areas for development. For the approach and methods of this assessment, see **Annex D**.

The assessment process began by forming a **Task Group** comprising representatives from the Office of the Civil Service Commission, the National Social Welfare Promotion Office, the Department of Children and Youth, the BMA, other government agencies, non-profit organizations, six educational institutions offering social work education, and professional organizations. This group played a critical role in contextualizing and co-defining the scope of the social service workforce, facilitating data collection, reviewing findings, and formulating recommendations. Task Group meetings were held at multiple stages: to define target populations, validate findings, and identify policy-relevant recommendations. The inclusion of diverse stakeholders ensured that the assessment was grounded in current operational realities across public and private sectors. For the full list of organizations with representatives participating, please see **Annex E**.

A mixed-method data collection strategy was employed to ensure a robust analysis. These methods included document reviews, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, administrative surveys, and an online survey. The diversity of methods aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding and triangulate findings for enhanced validity and reliability. An essential early step was establishing **operational definitions** for key terms such as “social services,” “social service workforce,” “professional workers,” “paraprofessional workers,” and “allied professionals.” These definitions were informed by GSSWA, UNICEF (GSSWA & UNICEF 2019) and ASEAN Ha Noi Declaration (ASEAN 2020), legal frameworks in Thailand, and extensive stakeholder consultation, recognizing the dynamic and diverse nature of social service roles across sectors.

The **desk review** covered both national and international sources, focusing on policy, regulatory frameworks, licensing and professional standards, education and training systems, and workforce development strategies. It also examined public financial planning and its integration with workforce planning. This review provided a foundation for understanding the current infrastructure and opportunities for workforce development.

The **in-depth interviews and focus groups** were conducted with two main groups: experts and frontline social service workers. Thirteen experts (13) see list in **Annex F**, each with over a decade of experience in social welfare and labour management, provided insights into the workforce's roles, responsibilities, and future planning needs. Their input informed the identification of key workforce categories and ongoing systemic barriers. Meanwhile, service providers contributed real-world perspectives on training needs, supervision, and workforce challenges. For the full list of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, please see **Annex G**.

Table 1: Aggregate information about individual surveys, KIIs, and FGDs

Type	Number targeted	Number Participated
Survey for social workers	400	701 : Male 141, Female 54, LGBTQ+ 14, Not Specified 5
Key Informant Interviews	12	12 : Male 6, Female 6
FGDs	2	
Total Participants of FDG	27	27 : Male 8, Female 19

For **survey data collection**, an administrative survey was sent to employers in both the government and private sectors, social work educational institutions, and professional organizations. The survey captured information on staffing, workforce development, and organizational practices. Private agencies were selected from the registry of public benefit organizations under the 2003 Social Welfare Promotion Act.

Nine of the completed surveys were received against the target of 10 government agencies as per the sampling framework, resulting in a 90% completion rate. For NGOs or public benefit organizations (PBOs), the completed survey received was 81 out of the 483 targeted agencies, resulting in 16.56% respond rate. For more detailed information on the survey completion, see **Annex H**.

Table 2: Aggregate information about the institutional survey

Type of Survey	Targeted responses	Responses received
Institutional Survey - Govt	10	9
Institutional Survey – NGOs/ PBOs	483	81
Institutional Survey – Social Work Schools	7	6
Institutional Survey – Professional Organisations	4	4

The **online survey of social service workers**, disseminated through platforms such as Enablingsurvey.com and the Thai Association of Social Workers' Facebook page, targeted 400 social service practitioners to gather individual-level data on roles, responsibilities, supervision, and career development. The target was to get 400 respondents who met specific criteria to ensure data quality, including working in social services and completing at least 50% of the survey. A total of 701 social service workers were submitted against a target of 400 from different ministries of entries submitted by 35.8 % social workers, while 22.1% community development officers, and the rest were submitted by various job titles. For basic information on social service workers who responded to the survey, see **Annex I**.

The **data collection tools** were adapted from the GSSWA's mapping and empowerment frameworks (GSSWA 2019). Seven sets of instruments were used, tailored to specific groups: government and NGO employers, educational institutions, professional organizations, individual workers, and focus group participants. Three experts reviewed the tools for content validity prior to deployment. All data collection tools are in **Annex J** of this report.

In addition, two **case studies** have been collected from government agencies to highlight interesting practices in social service workforce planning and development across both centralized and decentralized structures in **Annex K**.

Data cleaning and analysis combined quantitative and qualitative methods. Survey data were subjected to descriptive and inferential statistical analysis using Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 29.0.2.0, while qualitative data from interviews and focus groups were transcribed and thematically analyzed. When data collection and analysis are complete, the findings from both approaches are systematically compared and contrasted to identify similarities, differences, and complementary insights. Integrating both data sets enables a more comprehensive and nuanced interpretation of the phenomenon under study. This mixed-methods approach allowed for nuanced insights and strengthened data validity through triangulation.

However, the study faced several **limitations**, particularly during data collection, which may have affected the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the findings. One of the most significant challenges was the low response rate from private-sector agencies, especially PBOs/NGOs. Despite being a key component of the social service delivery system, many PBOs/NGOs did not respond to the survey, resulting in a smaller-than-anticipated sample for that group and potentially rendering the sector unrepresentative. Additionally, the MOI—the largest employer of social service personnel in Thailand—did not participate in the survey. As a result, data on MOI had to be compiled from secondary sources and literature reviews, which may have introduced inconsistencies or outdated information, thereby compromising the accuracy and completeness of the MOI-related workforce data.

Moreover, the study faced **methodological constraints** due to the absence of a centralized, up-to-date national database of social service workers. This made it impossible to implement a fully randomized sampling strategy, increasing the risk of sampling biases. The lack of a unified data system also led to discrepancies in the information provided by different government agencies. In several instances, it was unclear whether the figures reported referred to actual headcounts of employed personnel or to staffing frameworks and budgeted positions. These inconsistencies created uncertainty in interpreting the data and may have affected the reliability of workforce estimates. As such, while the assessment provides valuable insights into the structure and distribution of Thailand's social service workforce, the findings should be interpreted with caution, particularly in relation to workforce size and deployment across sectors.

Throughout the process, strict **ethical standards** were maintained. All participants received detailed information about the study and provided informed consent. Measures were implemented to protect participant privacy, including data anonymization, restricted access, encryption, and secure data storage. Data retention and sharing policies adhered to best practices in safeguarding sensitive information. **Quality assurance** measures were embedded at all stages. Academic experts and practitioners reviewed instruments and findings. A policy roundtable, co-hosted by the Thai Association of Social Workers and UNICEF in August 2025, brought together stakeholders from key government agencies, professional bodies, and academic institutions to validate findings and recommend evidence-informed strategies to strengthen Thailand's social service workforce.

4

Findings

This section presents the findings from the field data collection, organized into three key areas aligned with the assessment framework: workforce planning, development, and support. The results reflect an integration of quantitative and qualitative data sources, providing a comprehensive understanding of the current situation of the social service workforce in Thailand.

4.1 Overview of workforce planning

4.1.1 Structural, policy and administrative frameworks for workforce planning

A significant challenge in developing and strengthening Thailand's social service workforce is the lack of consistent, standardised definitions across sectors and agencies that differentiate between professional social workers, paraprofessionals, and volunteers. The current framework is not aligned with international and regional frameworks established under GSSWA (GSSWA & UNICEF 2019) and outlined in the ASEAN Road Map for the Implementation of the Ha Noi Declaration (ASEAN 2020). Despite the enactment of the Social Work Profession Act in 2013, which introduced licensing and professional standards, the Act does not provide a formal legal definition of "social work." This omission has led to ambiguity in practice, with various ministries and agencies applying different criteria for what constitutes a social worker or social service role.

Information from in-depth interviews with OCSC and Ministry of Finance representatives reveals that workforce planning and resource allocation are centrally managed by the OCSC, in coordination with other national bodies, such as the Budget Bureau and the NESDC. The OCSC, which governs recruitment and staffing standards, permits individuals with degrees in related fields such as sociology or psychology to be appointed to social work positions. This broad qualification framework dilutes social workers' professional identity and contributes to inconsistencies in service delivery and workforce data.

Thailand's decentralization policy and framework, which mandates the transfer of service responsibilities to LAOs, has not been fully realized in the social sector. Persistent challenges—including unclear role delineation between central and local agencies, overlapping mandates, and capped local personnel budgets—have impeded the effective transfer and implementation of social services. Inconsistencies in workforce data across ministries exacerbate these structural issues, including the absence of a national workforce registry or database, inadequate information management systems, and limited enforcement of professional licensing requirements under the Social Work Profession Act of 2013.

Although the Act introduced mandatory registration and established a regulatory professional council, its impact has been diluted by broad qualification standards and weak enforcement mechanisms. As a result, many social work roles continue to be filled by individuals without formal social work training, undermining professional identity and service quality. These systemic constraints collectively limit Thailand's ability to plan, develop, and sustain a competent and equitable social service workforce.

As a result of these constraints, only a portion of vacated positions—typically no more than 20%—are approved for reinstatement following civil servant retirements. Priority is given to essential roles that directly benefit public welfare, such as social workers or professionals in the health sector (e.g., nurses, pharmacists, and public health officers). By contrast, support functions—such as drivers, cleaners, and gardeners—are increasingly fulfilled through contract-based employment, which offers less job security and fewer long-term benefits (Representative of OCSC, interviewed October 2024).

To address the growing need for service delivery amidst these limitations, the government has introduced new employment categories, notably government employees and service contractors. These positions are typically hired on fixed-term contracts of 4–5 years, often without long-term fiscal commitments such as pensions and health care benefit for family members. Contract renewals are subject to performance evaluations and necessity assessments, mirroring private-sector practices and providing government agencies with greater flexibility in managing their workforces (Representative of OCSC, interviewed October 2024).

While ministries retain some discretion over internal workforce allocation, the final authority for determining the number of civil service positions lies with the respective Civil Service Sub-Committees (CSSs) within each ministry, subject to OCSC oversight. For example, the MSDHS operates within an approved framework of approximately 2,000 civil service positions. Any proposal to expand or reduce this number must follow formal procedures through the OCSC.

In addition, the Government Employee Commission (GEC) oversees the policy and operations of government employee positions, ensuring alignment with national workforce strategies. Proposals to expand the number of government employees that require additional budgetary resources must also be submitted to the Cabinet for approval, accompanied by a justification to ensure fiscal responsibility and public value (Representative of OCSC, interviewed October 2024).

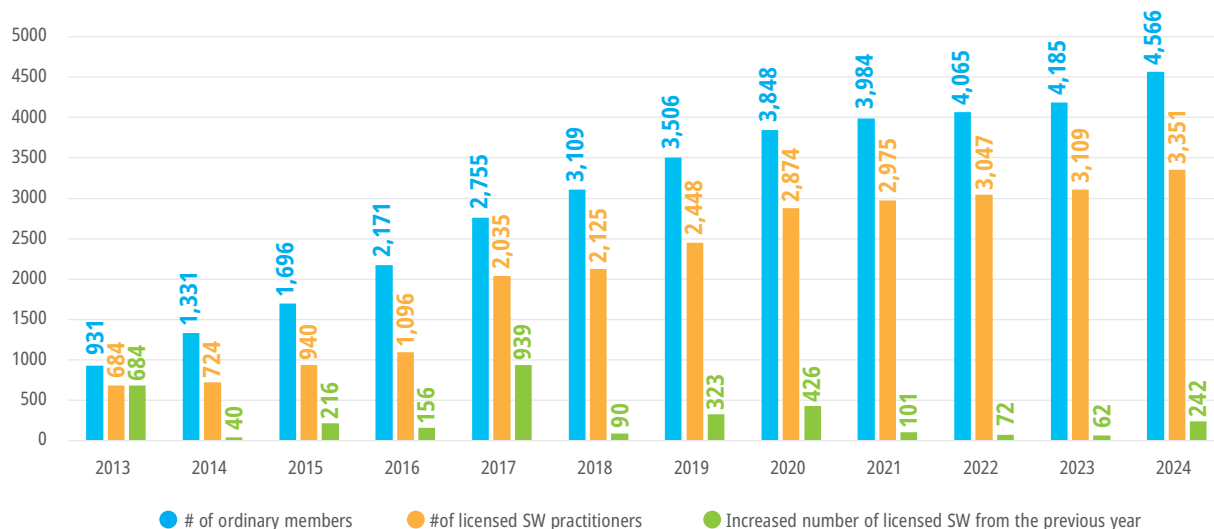
In the context of LAOs, while the legal framework grants autonomy in managing area-specific policies and services, personnel-related expenditures are capped at 40% of the total organizational budget. This constraint necessitates cautious consideration of staffing needs and reinforces the importance of aligning human resource decisions with service delivery priorities (Representative of OCSC, interviewed October 2024).

According to the rules of business, each ministry is permitted to adjust job descriptions in social fields within their allocated budget and number of positions, such as social workers or social development officers. However, such adjustments should be consistent with the needs and policies of the agency and cleared by OCSC. Therefore, determining the appropriate number of positions in terms of quality and quantity requires analysis in many aspects.

Thailand faces a critical shortage of social service workers, which significantly constrains the country's ability to deliver equitable and responsive social welfare services starting with long-standing employment freeze policy introduced after the 1997 economic crisis. As of November 2024, there were only 3,351 licensed social

workers nationwide, equating to approximately 5.00 social workers per 100,000 population (Social Work Professional Council 2024). This figure remains significantly below regional and global benchmarks (see more details under literature review), reflecting a persistent gap between workforce supply and population needs. Although the number of licensed practitioners has increased over the past decade, the growth has not kept pace with the country’s demographic and social service demands.

Figure 1: Number of ordinary and licensed members of the Social Work Professional Council of Thailand (2013 to 2024)



Source: Professional Social Work Council of Thailand

Between 2013 and 2024, the number of licensed social workers grew from 684 to 3,351. However, this growth has been uneven and has slowed considerably in recent years (Social Work Professional Council 2024). Data on the percentage of licensed social workers currently engaged in roles linked to social work provision are not available. This deceleration in licensing growth is particularly concerning given Thailand’s increasingly complex social issues, including an aging population, urbanization, and regional disparities in service access.

Information obtained from the Social Work Professions Council reveals that out of 1,741 licensed social workers, 1,741 have updated their profiles in the One Platform.¹ Note that not all SWPC members have access to the One Platform (**Table 3**). The data demonstrates that approximately 68% are working for government centralized agencies (30.1% in MSDHS, 23.3% in MoPH, and 7.3% in MoJ; 20% are working for government decentralized agencies (14.2% with BMA, and 6% with MoI), while a little more than 10% is working for NGOs. The data is consistent with the UNICEF& Thammasat University 2017 study (UNICEF & Thammasat University 2017), which states that 96% of licensed social workers are based in national-level institutions, while only 4% are deployed in local government settings.

¹ The online application containing the most updated information of SWPC members.

Table 3: Number of Licensed Social Workers by Affiliated Organization

Organization	No.	Government		NGOs	Others
		Centralized	Decentralized		
Ministry of Social Development and Human Security	524	524			
Ministry of Public Health	406	406			
Bangkok Metropolitan Administration	248		248		
Ministry of Justice	127	127			
Ministry of Interior	104		104		
Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation	86	86			
Non-Profit Organization	143			143	
Thai Red Cross	39			39	
Retired/Freelancer	21				21
Ministry of Defence	12	12			
Royal Thai Police Office	9	9			
Ministry of Labour	7	7			
Ministry of Education	6	6			
Office of the Prime Minister	5	5			
International Organizations	3			3	
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment	1	1			
TOTAL	1,741	1183	352	185	21
Percentage	100.00%	67.95%	20.22%	10.63%	1.21%

Note: Information was based on profiles updated on SWPC's One Platform, accounting for approximately 52% of all licensed social workers.

In terms of regional distribution, Bangkok stands out with 12.25 licensed social workers per 100,000 population, nearly 5 times higher than any other region. Northeast, with the highest population (over 21 million), has the lowest access to licensed social workers. The remaining regions (South, North, Central) cluster between 1.0 and 2.5 per 100,000 population, indicating a relatively low availability of licensed professionals across the rest of the country (**Table 4**). This geographic imbalance limits access to services provided by licensed social workers in rural and underserved areas. In order to enhance Thailand's decentralization policy, in-depth analysis of the distribution of licensed social workers, as well as other social services workforces should be considered.

Table 4: Regional distribution of licensed social workers

#	Region	# of licensed social workers	# population (National Statistical Office 2024)	Ratio per 100,000 population
1	North	295	11,893,771	2.48
2	Northeast	216	21,619,050	1.0
3	Central	323	17,463,077	1.85
3.1	Bangkok	668	5,455,020	12.25
4	South	239	9,520,292	2.51
		1,741	65,951,210	2.64

Note: Regional distribution of licensed social workers was based on profiles updated on SWPC's One Platform, accounting for approximately 52% of all licensed social workers.

Geographical disparity is an essential aspect in evaluating the coverage and distribution of the social service workforce across the country. Analysis of the institutional survey data indicates that volunteers who form a key component of the social service workforce are predominantly located in regional areas. The following table presents the regional distribution of MSDHS-affiliated volunteers.

Table 5: Regional distribution of MSDHS volunteers (DSDW 2025)

#	Region	# of volunteers	# population	Ratio per 100,000 population
1	North	90,306	11,893,771	759.27
2	Northeast	133,422	21,619,050	617.15
3	Central	90,389	17,463,077	517.60
3.1	Bangkok	7,900	5,455,020	144.82
4	South	65,183	9,520,292	684.67

Although the distribution of MSDHS volunteers may appear to show a gap for Bangkok, it is important to note that the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) operates its own full-time, paid volunteer team in the social service sector, consisting of 290 individuals. This group is included in the broader analysis of the social service workforce volunteers later in this report.

4.1.2 Limitations on workforce planning

Information on the legal framework and policy structure, including regulations related to the social service workforce, indicates the dynamics and situation of the civil service workforce that focuses on the efficient management of the workforce, with a focus on reducing the size of the civil service and long-term commitments. However, these approaches result in limited resources supporting the social service workforce, which may affect the current response to the increasing demands and social problems.

The present assessment found that public sector social service workers, who are subject to various employment systems, experience differing levels of job security and motivation to join and remain in civil service. Information from in-depth interviews and surveys of social service workers indicates that key motivating factors for these workers include salary, benefits, and training opportunities. Workers on long-term contracts (civil servants) tend to receive better wages and benefits than those on fixed-term or temporary contracts, which results in significantly different perceptions of job security. In addition, opportunities to participate in training and skills development also contribute to worker commitment and performance. Therefore, creating policies that can promote job security, along with improving welfare and training opportunities, is essential to increase motivation and retain the capabilities of social service workers in the public sector to be effective in the long term.

4.1.2.1 Varied salary and benefits

Salary rates for social service workers in the public and private sectors vary widely. In the public sector, it depends on the type of employment. Civil servants, government employees, and contract workers are eligible for different salaries and benefits. Although the survey of social service workers did not directly explore salary and benefits, a desk review found differences in salary and benefits received by civil servants, government employees, and contract workers. Civil servants have better job security and benefits than the other two groups. Professional social workers may be employed as civil servants, government employees, or contract workers, depending on the specific policies and administrative structures of each agency.

Civil servants' initial salary rate for those with a bachelor's degree is 16,500 baht monthly. Still, there will be career advancement by setting criteria for salary increases twice a year, leave rights, retirement benefits/pensions, and health care benefits through a direct payment system. Civil servants have the right to receive medical expenses from the government for themselves, their parents, spouses, and children. In the case of children, no more than three people are allowed, in order of priority. They must be legitimate children who are not yet of legal age or are of legal age but are incompetent or quasi-incompetent under the care of civil servants (excluding adopted children and children who are given to others as adopted children). If any child dies before reaching legal age, they can claim medical expenses for the next child instead (in the case of more than 3 children). They have the right to claim child tuition fees, etc., and have the opportunity to receive support to receive training to increase their knowledge from their employers. This is following the regulations of the Ministry of Finance.

While government employees, even though their initial salary is relatively higher than that of civil servants (initial salary rate for bachelor's degree graduates is 18,000 baht), salary increases are once a year, and they have the right to take leave (vacation leave, personal leave, sick leave, maternity leave). Still, the main difference is related to health care benefits, which use the social security benefit, and there is no pension like civil servants, there is no right to receive child tuition fees, and the employment contract is not more than 4 years at a time.

Table 6: Comparison of Employment Benefits in five types of bureaucracy²

Benefits	Type	Civil servants	Government Employees	MOPH Government Employees	Regular Contract Worker	Temporary Contract Worker
Salary	Entrance Salary	Lower than a Bachelor's degree 9400-11500 Baht	Lower than a Bachelor's degree 10430-13800 Baht	Lower than Bachelor's Degree 7590-12240 Baht	Rate of payment as specified in qualification for specific position, and rate of ๓๑๖ ๓ 337 ๓ 31 ๓ 59 (currently no additional hiring in this category)	Lower than Bachelor's Degree 6552-9530 Baht
		Bachelor graduated 15000-19830 Baht	Bachelor graduated 18000-22750 Baht	Bachelor graduated 13300-19680 Baht		Bachelor graduated 9032-14480 Baht
		Master graduated 17500-19250 Baht	Master graduated 21000 Baht	Master graduated 16400-20900 Baht		
		Doctoral graduated 21000-23100 Baht	Doctoral graduate 25000 Baht	Doctoral graduated 20000-24000 Baht		
Welfare	Medical expenses	Direct Payment	Social Security	Social Security	Direct Payment	Social Security
	House rental	/	x	x	/	x
	Retirement lump sum	/	Social Security Fund	Social Security Fund	/	Social Security Fund
	Pension	/	/ (social security)	/ (social security)	monthly payment	/ (social security)
Advancement	Salary Adjustment	2 times/ yr	1 time/yr	1 time/yr	2 times/yr	1 time/yr
	Level Adjustment	/	x	x	/	x

² Posted in The Coverage, 14 Nov 2022

Benefits	Type	Civil servants	Government Employees	MOPH Government Employees	Regular Contract Worker	Temporary Contract Worker
Leave	Sick leave (days/ year)	60	30	45	60	15
	Personal leave (days/ year)	45	10	15	40	no payment for leave day
	Annual leave (days/ year)	10	10 accumulatable (no AL for first 6 mths)	10 accumulatable (no AL for first 6 mths)	10 accumulatable (no AL for first 6 mths)	10 (no AL for first 6 mths)
	Maternity Leave (days)	90	90 (renumeration from agency 45 days and SSO 45 days)	90 (renumeration from agency 45 days and SSO 45 days)	90	90 Need to work at least 7 months (renumeration from agency 45 days and SSO 45 days)
	Continuing education Leave	/	x	/	/	x
Other benefits	Child support/ assistance	x	Social Security Fund	Social Security Fund	x	Social Security Fund
	Training expenses	/	/	/	/	/

In the group of contract employees, which is a form of employment that replaces the limitations in increasing the number of workers, the assessment found that contract employees will have a 1- year employment contract and a fixed salary base (no salary increases) and do not have the same rights and benefits as civil servants and government employees or receive support to receive training because it is a contract for services/hiring to work on a project that is focused on the success of the work by qualified person employed within the period specified in the contract or employment agreement. In the private sector, salary rates depend on each agency, with no standardized schedule, and healthcare benefits are based mainly on social security.

4.1.2.2 Structural shifts and workforce strain in social services

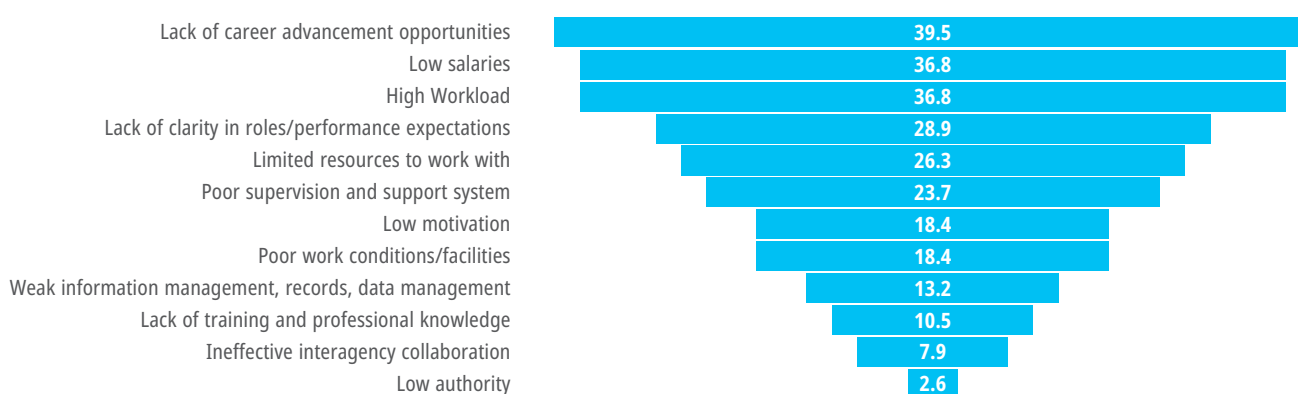
Based on surveys of government agencies and social service workers, it was found that the public sector's human resources management tends to reduce the budget burden in the long term by reducing the number of civil servants and hiring fewer, less obligated employees, such as government employees and contract employees. This approach makes it more challenging to secure the resources supporting social workers' manpower. Such structural changes make it difficult for agencies to respond to increasingly complex and diverse social needs and problems, including changes in community population structure and needs. Therefore, manpower management requires efficient and appropriate planning to support workers in solving social problems effectively and to create sustainability in the provision of social services in the future.

Sample case studies in **Annex K** highlight interesting practices in social service workforce planning and development in both centralized (Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection) and decentralized (Bangkok Metropolitan Administration Organization) government structures, through evidence based generation and policy advocacy.

Data from a survey of seven related government agencies, the Royal Thai Police (the police hospital) and Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (which has 38 subordinate agencies under its jurisdiction), revealed that the top three challenges in government agency operations were: lack of opportunities for career advancement (39.5 %), low salaries, and high workloads (36.8 percent equally) and lack of clarity in roles (28.9 percent). In addition, 26.3 percent of the agencies providing information reported challenges due to limited operational resources. This information points to structural challenges or limitations at the agency level that should be considered at the policy and budget-allocation levels. This will enable agencies providing social service agencies to perform their duties effectively (**Figure 2**).

At the service provider level, survey data from 701 social service workers revealed several key challenges in their daily work. A significant majority of workers (80.6 percent) reported a heavy workload, while 70.9 percent reported limited resources. Additionally, 63.2 percent felt that their salaries did not reflect their qualifications and experience. These concerns closely align with the findings of the organizational-level survey, which identified similar issues—such as high workloads, resource constraints, and inadequate compensation—as the top five operational challenges (**Figure 3**).

Figure 2: Challenges in the Operation of Government Agencies (Percent)



Note: Percentage calculated from the number of government agencies that provided data, totaling 38 agencies.

Figure 3: Challenges Faced in the Daily Work of Workers (percent)



Note: The percentage is calculated by counting the people who answered “agreed and strongly agreed” with each issue.

4.1.2.3 Lack of harmony between centralised and decentralised social service provision

The governance structure in Thailand is multi-tiered, with local administration playing a crucial role in public service delivery. At the heart of this system, in terms of overseeing local bodies, is the Department of Local Administration (DLA). It is an agency under the Ministry of Interior, which is central to promoting and supporting the operations of local administrative organisations across the country. Its mandate encompasses the development of local plans, personnel administration, financial management, and general administrative guidance, all aimed at enhancing LAOs' capacity and efficiency in providing public services. The DLA is also responsible for establishing regulations and standards for local personnel management and for continuous personnel improvement within both the DLA and the LAOs.

Thailand's local administrative system is extensive, comprising various types of LAOs. The country had a total of 7,853 LAO units. These units are categorized as follows: (DLA 2025)

- 76 Provincial Administrative Organizations (PAOs)
- 2,441 Municipalities, further broken down into 30 City Municipalities, 178 Town Municipalities, and 2,233 Sub-district Municipalities
- 5,334 Sub-district Administrative Organizations (SAOs)
- 2 Special Forms of Local Administrative Organizations, namely the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration and the City of Pattaya

The decentralization framework in Thailand, significantly advanced by the Thai Decentralization Act of 1999, has transferred numerous responsibilities from central government ministries to these LAOs. This devolution of power has tasked local administrative bodies with a broad range of duties, including infrastructure development, public services, public health initiatives, educational provision, and, notably, social welfare and social work. LAOs are thus positioned to engage directly with local communities to address pressing social challenges such as poverty, health disparities, social inequality, homelessness, and loneliness. However, the effectiveness of these efforts can be constrained by factors such as budget limitations and workforce spending regulations. The sheer number and variety of these local administrative units underscore the highly decentralized nature of public service delivery in Thailand. This extensive distribution of responsibilities, while intended to bring services closer to citizens, inherently complicates the process of aggregating specific functional staff data across all units, particularly in the absence of a centralized, granular reporting mechanism. The diverse structures and personnel allocations that can arise from local autonomy in staffing further contribute to this complexity (Amornsiriphonga 2017).

4.1.2.4 Disparities Between the Legal Framework and Civil Service Standards for Social Workers.

The current system in Thailand to hire and regulate the social workers reveals a notable discrepancy between the legal requirements for social workers, as outlined in the Social Work Profession Act 2013 and the Social Work Promotion Act 2003, and the Social Service Standards set by the OCSC (OCSC 2011a).

The Social Work Profession Act 2013 defines two groups of social workers: "social workers" (social work profession practitioners) and "licensed social workers" (licensed social work practitioners). Section 28 of this Act specifies that certain social work professions require a license. These include roles carried out by social welfare workers or officials under various laws, such as those related to criminal procedure, child protection, domestic violence, labour protection, rehabilitation of narcotic addicts, social welfare provision, mental health, and juvenile and family court procedures. It also mandates licenses for qualified persons or experts in social welfare, as outlined in laws concerning child protection, compensation for injured persons, anti-human trafficking, and child adoption, as well as social welfare professions within governmental organizations.

In contrast, the OCSC Social Work Classification broadly define qualifications for social worker positions across different levels (Operational, Professional, Senior Professional/Specialist, and Expert). These standards typically require a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree or other equivalent qualifications deemed appropriate by the relevant government agency or the Civil Service Commission. However, a key point of divergence is that these OCSC position standards do not include a professional social work license as a mandatory requirement (OCSC 2011b).

This creates a significant disparity where the Social Work Profession Act explicitly designates certain government social welfare roles as “licensed social work professions,” but the OCSC’s official position standards for these civil service roles do not mandate such a license. Consequently, most government agencies align their job advertisements with the OCSC standards, which may omit the licensure requirement. **Table 7** highlights this discrepancy in different agencies and ministries. Despite this, survey data from social service agencies indicates that the employment of licensed social workers is considered essential for effectively addressing the needs of the populations they serve. This highlights a gap between legal expectations for professional practice and the actual civil service recruitment criteria.

Furthermore, the Social Welfare Promotion Act 2003 defines a “social worker” as a person who holds at least a Bachelor’s degree in social work or has completed a social work training course meeting the standards set by the NSWPC, or possesses other qualifications notified by the Commission. The Commission is also responsible for determining the social work training standard and qualifications for social workers under this Act, as well as laying down rules for the promotion and support of technical knowledge and personnel development for social workers and volunteers. This older Act of 2003 establishes a broad definition and role for a governing committee in setting standards, which the newer Social Worker Profession Act of 2013 then builds upon with specific licensure requirements for certain roles, creating the context for the aforementioned discrepancy with OCSC standards that have not been revised since 2011 to align with the Social Worker Profession Act of 2013.

The ASEAN Ha Noi Declaration Road Map also calls for the development and strengthening of legislation and policies that define and enhance the roles and functions of social workers, promoting professionalization, standards, and accountability. Specifically, it mandates Member States to “Adopt, standardise and strengthen accreditation, certification, registration and licensing systems for social workers and para-social workers”. It emphasizes that national laws, policies, and strategic plans should frame the certification, licensing, and registration of professional social workers, outlining required qualifications and competency standards for licensure (ASEAN 2023).

The survey findings reveal that the need for professional social work licensure is concentrated in agencies providing direct social and health services. High demand was expressed by the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Ministry of Public Health, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, the Ministry of Defense (specific departments), the Royal Thai Police, and selected institutions under the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation. These agencies identified specific units—such as departments working with vulnerable populations, public health service centers, and medical facilities—where licensure is essential, particularly in roles involving direct service to clients (**Table 7**).

In contrast, some agencies indicated through a survey that there is no need for licensure despite having social work positions, including the Ministry of Justice (Departments of Probation, Juvenile Observation and Protection, and Corrections), the Ministry of Labor (Social Security Office), and certain Ministry of Defense hospitals. Others, such as the Ministry of Interior and some departments within responding ministries, did not specify their stance or did not respond. The findings highlight inconsistency in recognizing licensure requirements across government sectors, with clear prioritization in health and welfare agencies but limited uptake in justice, labor, and certain defense sectors.

Table 7: Needs for Social Work Professional Licensure

Agency	Considered SW professional license as “Essential”	Considered SW professional license as “Non-essential”	Not specified
Ministry of Social Development and Human Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office of the Permanent Secretary Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Department of Women’s Affairs and Family Development, Department of Older Persons Department of Children and Youth Office of the Secretary of the Department of Social Development and Welfare (only required in cases where work is done directly with service users) 		
Ministry of Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Health Department of Medical Services Department of Mental Health 		- Office of the Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Justice		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Probation Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection Department of Corrections 	
Ministry of Labor			- Social Security Office
Ministry of Defense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office of the Permanent Secretary Royal Thai Army Medical Department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phramongkutklao Hospital Surasakmontri Camp Hospital Phichai Dab Hak Camp Hospital Pha Muang Camp Hospital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veterans Organization Prajaksilpakom Camp Hospital
Ministry of Education	There is no social worker position		
Royal Thai Police	Police Hospital		
Bangkok Metropolitan Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Development Office Medical Department Department of Health Office of Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment Public Health Service Center Public Health Service Center, Kao Mai Plus Clinic Public Health Service Center, Mental Health Clinic 		
Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation	Ramathibodi Hospital Faculty of Medicine, Khon Kaen University Faculty of Medicine, Chiang Mai University		Faculty of Medicine, Thammasat University
Ministry of Interior	No response received		

4.1.3 Social service workforces in each category

GSSW has defined the social service workforce as “The social service workforce is an inclusive concept” referring to a broad range of governmental and nongovernmental professionals and paraprofessionals who work with children, youth, adults, older persons, families, and communities to ensure healthy development and well-being. The social service workforce focuses on preventative, responsive, and promotive services that are informed by the humanities and social sciences, Indigenous knowledges, discipline-specific and interdisciplinary knowledge and skills, and ethical principles. Social service workers engage people, structures, and organizations to: facilitate access to needed services, alleviate poverty, challenge and reduce discrimination, promote social justice and human rights, and prevent and respond to violence, abuse, exploitation, neglect, and family separation (GSSWA & UNICEF 2019).

While Thailand has legislation regulating licensed professional social work, the roles and functions of professional and paraprofessional workers are not understood in the same way. Social service workers in Thailand lack a formal, unified definition, causing ambiguity in roles like “professional social service worker,” “paraprofessional social service worker,” “paraprofessional social worker,” and “volunteer” across agencies. This hinders workforce standardization and size determination.

The present assessment applied the definition framework for the social service workforce developed by GSSWA and UNICEF (2020) to categorize the workforce, thereby capturing a comprehensive overview of the social service workforce in Thailand.

4.1.3.1 Professional Social Service Workers

As defined by GSSWA and UNICEF (2020), professional social service workers are those in social services workforce that typically have a relevant secondary to higher-level qualification—such as a bachelor’s degree or university diploma—typically involving three to four years of study, or an equivalent advanced-level national vocational qualification with a focus on developing core professional practice competencies. In many contexts, graduates of these programmes may progress to postgraduate study at the Master’s or Doctoral level. For the present assessment, the classification of professional social service workers was based on the acquisition of a bachelor’s degree or university diploma, as well as how their position and roles were defined by their affiliation.

From the definition, the professional social service workers include social workers, and other workforce with their roles identified with those of social service workforces, and the requirement of graduate degree. From the survey conducted, this group of workforce can be categorized as per **Table 8**.

Table 8: Professional social service workers in Government centralized and decentralized system

Professional Social Service Worker	GOs centralized system	GOs decentralized system
Social Workers	Social workers (MSDHS, MOPH, MOJ, MOL, MOD, RTP, MHESI)	Social workers (LAOs and BMA)
	Social Work Sergeant (MOD)	Para-social worker (BMA)
		Public Health Assistant (Social Welfare Mission) (BMA)
Other Professional Social Service Workers	Social Development Worker (MSDHS)	Social Development Worker (BMA)
	Child Welfare Officer (MSDHS)	
	Labour Specialist (MSDHS)	Community Development Specialist (LAOs)
	Probation officer (MOJ)	

(1) Social Worker According to GSSW and UNICEF PROPOSED GUIDANCE ON DEVELOPING MINIMUM SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE RATIOS, the **social work** profession is the leading and core profession in the social service workforce. It is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion and participation, and the empowerment and liberation of people. The principles of social justice, human rights, gender responsiveness, cultural sensitivity, collective responsibility, and respect for diversities are central to social work. Drawing on theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and improve wellbeing.

In Thailand “Professional Social Workers” are defined by OCSC and laws like the Social Welfare Promotion Act (2003) and the Social Work Professional Act (2013). These instruments also specify qualifications and the scope of work for professional social workers. They have duties to promote social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment of people. They also include social workers with specialized expertise from training and receiving a certificate of qualification.

Social Welfare Promotion Act 2003 defines a “Social worker” as a person engaged in social welfare provision who holds at least a Bachelor’s degree in social work or has completed a social work training course meeting the standards set by the National Social Welfare Promotion Commission (NSWPC), or possesses other qualifications notified by the Commission. The NSWPC, established under this Act, is responsible for determining standards for social welfare provision and establishing regulations for certifying the performance standards of social welfare organizations, social workers, and volunteers. The Act also outlines the composition and duties of the NSWPC, including gathering data, conducting research, coordinating social welfare activities, monitoring evaluations, and providing training for social workers and volunteers (RTG 2003).

The Social Work Professional Act, 2013, distinguishes between a “social work profession practitioner” and a “licensed social work profession practitioner”. A “social work profession” is defined as a profession requiring knowledge and skills in social welfare to prevent and address problems for individuals, families, groups, or communities, enabling them to fulfil their social duties and live peacefully (RTG 2013).

A “licensed social work professional practitioner” is a person who has registered and obtained a license from the SWPC. To be a licensed practitioner, one must typically be an ordinary member of the SWPC, holding at least a bachelor’s degree in social work or another field certified by the SWPC, and have completed training with work experience related to the protection, consultation, promotion, and support of vulnerable populations such as children, youth, women, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and the disadvantaged, according to SWPC standards.

The SWPC’s objectives include establishing and maintaining standards and ethics, promoting and developing the social work profession, and providing related social services. Its powers include registering and licensing practitioners, setting service standards, developing training curricula, issuing approvals/certifications of expertise, promoting education and research, certifying university degrees for membership, and maintaining the honour and rights of the profession.

The Act specifies various fields where a licensed social work professional is required, including work under the Criminal Procedure Code, Child Protection Act, Family Violence Protection Act, Labor Protection Act, Drug Addict Rehabilitation Act, Social Welfare Promotion Act, Mental Health Act, and Juvenile and Family Court Act. Practicing these licensed professions without registration and a license is prohibited, with certain exceptions for citizens performing civic duties, students or trainees under supervision, individuals assigned by government or private agencies under supervision, or consultants/experts approved by the board.

The OCSC utilizes a classification system for civil servants as per the Civil Service Act 2008, placing social work positions under the “knowledge worker” category at the professional level, which necessitates a bachelor’s degree (OCSC 2008). The OCSC’s “Social Work Classification” standard (first adopted in Dec 2008 and revised in July 2011) describes the field as covering positions that perform social welfare work related to assisting individuals with social problems, including children, teenagers, the elderly, beggars, prostitutes, prisoners,

patients, persons with disabilities, and the general public facing problems they cannot resolve on their own or within their families, or who are in hardships affecting society as a whole. This work involves problem assessment and assistance provided according to social work principles (OCSC 2011a).

For GO centralized system, social worker positions under the OCSC are categorised into four levels based on job title: Operational/Practitioners/Entry, Professional/Experienced, Senior Professional/Specialist, and Expert (OCSC 2011a). Social workers at the entry level/practitioners (3-8-026-1) advance through the OCSC levels, their responsibilities expand in scope and complexity. For instance:

- Professional/Experienced Level (3-8-026-2): Involves supervising or acting as an experienced practitioner, using high expertise, and making decisions or solving difficult problems. Duties include advanced assessment, comprehensive service delivery, problem analysis, database development, content creation for social welfare tools, and monitoring/evaluation of projects and services.
- Senior Professional/Specialist Level (3-8-026-3): Entails supervising or acting as an experienced practitioner with very high expertise, solving very difficult problems, establishing guidelines for fact-finding, crisis intervention, supervision, and developing social welfare/social work systems and policies.
- Expert Level (3-8-026-4): Functions as an expert practitioner or consultant at the ministry/department level, handling complex academic problems with widespread impact. Responsibilities include providing high-level advice, establishing systemic service guidelines, forecasting social trends, developing knowledge and innovations, advising on social welfare policy, and determining evaluation guidelines for holistic capacity development

Specifically, for a social worker position at the operational, practitioner, or entry level, the OCSC specifies that candidates must hold one of the following qualifications (OCSC 2011b):

- A bachelor's degree or equivalent in fields such as psychology, social work, social and behavioural sciences, political science, or other fields deemed appropriate by the relevant government agency or certified by the OCSC.
- A master's degree or equivalent in the fields above.
- A doctorate degree or equivalent in the fields above.
- A degree or other qualification that the OCSC considers comparable to the listed fields, appropriate for the job's duties and responsibilities

The general nature of work for social work positions, as specified in OCSC standards, includes operational, planning, coordination and service aspects and covers;

- 1) Fact finding, interviewing for background, home visit, follow up and investigate the facts, study the community, social assessment and diagnosis and provide social services to the target groups at the individual, family, group and community levels.
- 2) Provide counseling, advice, assistance, treatment, rehabilitation, prevention, protection and safeguarding services to enable the target group to help themselves.
- 3) Collect, summarize, evaluate, prioritize the severity of the problem, analyze the causes and effects of the problem.
- 4) Survey, collect, study, prepare reports, analyze academic data, social situations and problems, create databases, plan, and develop standards and criteria for developing social welfare and social work systems.
- 5) Collect and compile data and statistics on social welfare operations, create social work tools, manuals, guidelines, academic documents, media; and

- 6) Prepare information about the situation and problems of the target group to be used in developing and planning for social welfare and social services.

It's clear from the assessment of the OCSC and legal framework that the discrepancy between the definitions of "social worker" and the qualifications required for these roles across different governing bodies and acts is a challenge. While the OCSC, the Social Welfare Promotion Act 2003, and the Social Work Professional Act 2013 all aim to define and regulate social work, they do so with varying scopes and qualification requirements. The OCSC, for instance, allows for a broader range of academic backgrounds (e.g., psychology, political science) for operational / entry-level "social worker" positions, which may not always align with the specialized social work degrees emphasized by the two acts for "professional social workers" or "licensed social work profession practitioners." This lack of a unified and consistent approach, coupled with divergent qualification requirements, creates ambiguity, complicates workforce standardization, and ultimately hinders the comprehensive assessment, planning and development of Thailand's social service workforce. Resolving these discrepancies is crucial for professionalizing the sector and ensuring consistent, high-quality service delivery.

For government employees, positions are classified into 5 categories with different levels of expertise and pay scales: services, technical, general administration, professional, and specialized professional. "Social worker" government employment is currently being considered as a general administration category.

For the centralized system, the positions of social workers include 3,325 positions in MSDHS, 493 in MOPH, 298 in MOJ, 3 in MOL, 11 in MOD, 10 in RTP, and 34 in MHESI. In addition, the MOD data informant also identifies the position of the social work sergeant, but there is only one such position. In the decentralized system, there are 318 social worker positions in BMA, while the numbers for the Local Administration Organization are not specified in the MOI data informant. The description and level developed by OCSC for social workers were applied. For BMA in particular, additional job titles and positions have been developed, including para-social worker (name of position), and public health assistant (social welfare mission), which required a bachelor's degree in social work.

BMA employs Public Health Assistants (Social Work Mission) who require a social work degree, reflecting both the demand for social workers and constraints in organizational structures and staffing budgets.

The position of Para-social worker has been formally established by BMA. The position requires a degree in social work, which might conflict with the title used in other countries, although it does not require a professional social work license. The primary duties and responsibilities of para-social workers in BMA include performing tasks at the basic operational level that require the application of knowledge and technical skills to carry out social work activities under the supervision, guidance, and inspection of experienced or licensed social workers, as well as performing other assigned duties.

Based on the available evidence, it is found that although the term para-social worker or para social service worker is generally defined internationally as a person holding a qualification below a bachelor's degree—most commonly an associate degree or a vocational certificate—in Thailand, qualification requirements continue to vary widely.

(2) Other Professional Social Service Workers

From the definition and the survey conducted, in addition to social worker, the professional social service workers in Thai government include those in centralized system consist of social development worker (in MSDHS), child welfare officer (in MSDHS), probation officer (in DJOP), labour specialist (in Ministry of Labour), and social work sergeant (in Ministry of Defense). For those in the decentralized system, there are community development specialist (in LAOs under MOI), and social development worker (in BMA).

(2.1) Social Development Worker

The Social Development Specialist is a career dedicated to providing social services, which, according to the Civil Service Commission's position standards, is distinct from the social worker position (OCSC 2009b). This role is categorized as an academic position within the Education, Art, Social Studies, and Community Development occupational group. Social Development Worker are classified as "Knowledge Workers" and operate at the "Operational / practitioners' level" as an entry-level position within the "Social Development" line of work. Just like the social workers, there are four classification that include operations, professional, specialist and expert level.

The general description of the work is 1) Surveying, collecting, studying, analyzing, and conducting preliminary academic research for the benefit of operations and the creation of systems, standards, measures, guidelines, criteria, rules, regulations, and regulations for social development and human security. 2) Collect, study, analyze preliminary social situation data, monitor the situation, and monitor social situations. 3) Promote, support, and provide services related to developing potential and protecting rights. 4) Collect, compile data, statistics, prepare academic documents, and media for use in social development and human security. 5) Collect data, analyze, and prepare preliminary reports to support fundraising and fund allocation under responsibility, and 6) Monitor, collect, and store data on social development and human security operations (OCSC 2009b).

A Social Development Officer must hold at least a bachelor's degree, or other equivalent qualifications deemed appropriate by the relevant government agency or the Civil Service Commission. They are also required to possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies for performing their duties in the position (OCSC 2009b).

From the survey data, there are social development officer positions that considered as social services workforces by the data informant in MSDHS (total of 875 positions) as part of centralized system, and BMA (total of 426 positions) as part of the decentralized system.

(2.2) Community Development Specialist

The Community Development Specialist role is position in Local Administration Organization, that include academic aspect of community development. This line of work involves community development on economic, social, culture, education, and recreation, hygiene and sanitation, local administration and development. They function as the liaison with other relevant organization, in order to assist local people in all aspects.

Just like the social workers and social development worker categories, there are four classifications for community development specialist that include operational, professional, specialist and expert levels. All roles involve operational- practical, planning, coordination and services aspects. To qualify for this position, an individual must possess a bachelor's degree or an equivalent qualification in a field deemed appropriate by the relevant government agency, or a master's or doctorate degree, or other qualifications recognized by the relevant agencies

From the survey data, only data informant from MOI considered the position of community development specialist as social services workforce, which total number of 5,267 positions that likely situate in the LAOs under decentralized system.

(2.3) Other professional workers

In addition to the professional social service workers mentioned previously, agencies responding to the survey also identified other social service workers with required Bachelor degree. Ministry of Social Development and Human Security indicated that there are child welfare officers who are typically hired as government employees with the role involving implementing child welfare, rights protection, and quality-of-life promotion activities in accordance with relevant laws, including the Child Protection Act and the Adoption Act. Key responsibilities include supporting children in foster care or disadvantaged families, conducting field visits to assist individuals facing social problems, and referring them to appropriate agencies. The work also entails planning and coordinating with networks, agencies, and organizations to address individual cases or broader social welfare needs, as well as providing consultation on rights protection for children and youth with disabilities (MSDHS, 2025).

In addition to child welfare officers, the Ministry of Justice has probation officers. Probation officer main tasks include findings facts, analyze, evaluate, and prepare reports on the perpetrators to be purposed to the legal authority for their consideration in the pre-filing class, the court's trial floor and after the court has a verdict; analyze, classify, plan, correct, rehabilitate, assist, provide relief and support the perpetrators to deliver public services for adjustment to become good citizen; as well as promote, support and coordinate with the family, communities and civil society to participate in the care and assistance to prevent recidivism.

Labour specialists in the Ministry of Labour tasks include performing labor academic work which involves study, analyze and research various issues in the field of labor, to determine labor standards and solving labor related problems; develop labor related plan and projects for the operation and development; and to seek assistance and cooperation with foreign countries in the field of labor; compiling, studying, analyzing information on the labor market; developing media and information on the labor market; monitoring and controlling the work of non-Thai; providing and promoting employment, training, disseminating knowledge and understanding about labor work; advising, answering, and clarifying various labor related problems; developing a recruitment system to improve the quality of life; providing career guidance; and controlling the work of foreigners.

In agencies where social service providers are limited or absent—such as district-level hospitals under the Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Public Health—related professionals like nurses are often tasked with social work responsibilities. In agencies under the MSDHS, sometimes psychologists are often assigned tasks of social workers within a defined scope due to shortages in qualified personnel. Sometimes a psychologist in MSDHS is assigned to perform the duties of a social worker.

4.1.3.2 Paraprofessional Social Service Workers

According to the GSSW and UNICEF guideline to strengthen the social service workforce for child protection (February 2019): A **para-professional** would typically work next to or support the work of a professional in the same field. A para-professional worker is trained to perform certain functions, but not always legally certified or licensed to practice as a full professional, which in some fields requires college or university degrees or specialized training. Paraprofessionals serve vulnerable individuals, particularly where social welfare systems are underdeveloped, and often act as the “first line of response at the community level.” (GSSWA & UNICEF 2019).

Within the GSSWA and UNICEF Guidance and ASEAN framework, paraprofessionals are characterized as individuals who have received non-degree training to perform specific social work functions, primarily in an auxiliary capacity, supporting the work of professional social workers and filling gaps in service provision, especially at the community level through outreach and direct support to vulnerable individuals and groups.

As per the guideline and data from the survey, the paraprofessionals social service workers in Thailand include social development officer (under Ministry of Social Development and Human Security), and community development worker (under Local Administration Organizations under decentralized structure) roles described in the OCSC classifications (OCSC, 2009a), particularly in terms of academic qualifications and the scope of responsibilities.

Table 9: Para-Professional social service workers in Government centralized and decentralized system

Para-Professional Social Service Workers	GOs centralized system	GOs decentralized system
Para-professional	Social Development Officer (MSDHS)	Community Development Officer (LAOs)
Volunteers	MSDHS volunteers (MSDHS)	BMA volunteers (BMA)

Although the Hanoi Road Map advocates for this para-professional social service workers for professionalization through inclusion in academic and continuing education and emphasizes the need for their supervision by qualified staff, their fundamental role is often to serve alongside or under the guidance of professional social workers to enhance access to services, alleviate poverty, promote human rights, and address various forms of violence and exploitation.

(1) Social Development Officer

The OCSC classifies Social Development Officer as “general” worker. This occupational field covers positions engaged in social development work, involving activities to promote and provide social development services through the policies and plans of the relevant government agency, as well as performing other related duties. A university degree is not required for these positions. The work involves carrying out social development activities in accordance with established guidelines, models, procedures, and methods, under the supervision, guidance, and inspection of others, along with other tasks as assigned.

(2) Community Development Officer

Community Development Officer is classified as a general position. The name of the work line is community development officer, as specified in the position standards of the Civil Service Commission. This work line covers various positions that work in community development, which has the nature of work related to community development in economy, society, culture, education and recreation, health and sanitation, local government and development in other areas. The officer coordinates between government agencies and other related organizations to help local people in all aspects and perform other related duties. However, community development officers do not need a bachelor’s degree.

(3) Other paraprofessionals

Data from the agency survey indicate that several positions can be classified as para-professional social worker roles, as they carry out functions to support professional social service workers, despite varying job titles across organizations. In agencies under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, staff in positions such as childcare workers, administrative officers, and nursing assistants are often assigned social service tasks within a defined scope due to shortages in qualified personnel.

(4) Volunteers

Volunteers, within the context of the social service sector, play various roles. They are typically individuals who possess knowledge and understanding of local social issues. Volunteers primarily play an auxiliary role by filling gaps in service provision that are not covered by professionally qualified staff or paid paraprofessionals, often at the community level (ASEAN 2023). It is not a homogeneous group in Thailand. They may include professionals, paraprofessionals, or non-professionals. Unlike paid paraprofessionals, volunteers typically do not receive a salary, although they may receive a stipend or other forms of compensation. They are generally engaged and trained for specific roles or tasks, most often at the community level. A “para-social worker” can

be a supervised paraprofessional staff person or even a volunteer who serves the needs of vulnerable individuals (GSSWA & UNICEF 2019).

In Thailand, volunteering reflects interconnectedness in society. The history of volunteering is long-standing, dating back to community support in ancient times. It gained significance in the 20th century with the establishment of non-profit organisations, such as the Thai Red Cross Society in 1913, which promoted volunteerism for disaster victims and the disadvantaged. During World War II, volunteer work provided crucial logistical and security support for the sick and wounded (Thai Redcross Society 2025). After the war, many volunteer organizations were established, such as international volunteer groups, volunteer libraries, and groups working for local development, especially in the social and cultural spheres.

Currently, volunteering is being promoted in various forms by both government and private organizations, such as the Civil Defence Volunteers (CDV), Probationer Volunteers, Village health volunteers (VHV), (World Health Organization. 2021) Social Development and Human Security Volunteer (SDHSV), graduate volunteers, volunteers of the Thailand Council of Social Welfare, Red Cross Youth Volunteers, and Bangkok's Public Health Volunteers (BPHV), etc., where the missions or scope of duties of each type of volunteer are diverse, with both similarities and differences (Vichit-Vadakan 2009). One volunteer may serve in multiple capacities at the same time with different volunteering schemes, with VHV considered the biggest and most structured volunteer organization in Thailand.

However, we consider volunteers who generally play a supportive role by filling gaps not covered by qualified professionals or paraprofessionals in the social service sector, most often at the community level. SDHSV plays an essential role in this context, as mandated by MSDHS. SDHVs are citizens who are usually already in the area and have deep knowledge and understanding of local social problems. Becoming a volunteer aims to support the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security in helping target groups within its mission, including children, youth, women, the disabled, the elderly, and the homeless.

The primary duties of SDHSV consists of three main aspects: (1) identifying target groups and monitoring situation by surveying and screening for those in need of assistance, including other social problems in the area; (2) providing initial assistance; such as providing essential including food, clothing, shelter and medicine, as well as appropriate counseling (3) referring those in need to relevant agencies (Pienkhuntod 2023). Their duties are linked to both national and local social protection efforts, including early detection and support, and to serving as a bridge between communities and formal social service systems. Although unpaid, the SDHSVs receive support for expenses in carrying out the duties and responsibilities, such as surveying and reporting on the situation of social problems, and compensation for transportation (MSDHS 2023).

As of October 2025, there are total of 389,344 SDHS volunteers spread across the country, including some abroad, which can be disaggregated into 103,359 males, 276,265 females, and 9,720 not-specified gender (DSDW 2025). The educational qualifications of SDHSVs are not limited. Currently, SDHSVs have educational qualifications ranging from primary education to doctoral degrees (DSDW 2025a).

Before performing their duties, the SDHSVs are required to undergo a training course (MSDHS 2020) which is currently an E-Learning covering the following contents: 1) Social situations and target groups and the SDHSV's work, 2)Concept and ideology of volunteer work and volunteers for social development and human security,3)Laws and people's rights, 4) The concept of social development and human security, 5) Social and community welfare arrangements, 6) Community study and analysis, 7) Social surveillance and monitoring techniques, initial assistance and referral coordination, 8) Creating networks to mobilizing social development and human security work, 9) Creating plans/projects, and 10) Techniques for extracting lessons from the work of the SDHSV and writing reports. Participants are required to watch all 10 video clips and complete a post-lesson assessment, achieving a minimum score of 70% to receive a certificate of completion and become officially registered as SDHS Volunteers. The total duration of the 10 video clips is approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes. MSDHS is currently working to further build the volunteer's expertise across various areas, including the elderly, people with disabilities, families, and children and youth.

In the decentralized structure, BMA which is has a unique form of local government administration established under the Bangkok Administration Act of 1985, and currently operates under the Bangkok Administration Act of 2007 which, in addition to hiring personnel in the form of BMA's civil servants and employees, also has volunteers in various fields, such as child care volunteers in child development center and Preschool, Bangkok Public Health Volunteers (BPHV), Volunteer for social development (technology), sports field volunteer, social welfare volunteer, Volunteers working with persons with disabilities, volunteers working with children and youth, and volunteers working in finance and account, etc.

The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA)³ operates under a unique form of local government, so various volunteer mechanisms have been developed to support Bangkok's missions across multiple sectors, enhance its flexibility to address the limitation in its social service workforce. However, when applying the definition of the social service workforce, only volunteers who are directly engaged in delivering social services in Bangkok are initially included. These are detailed in **Table 10**. The BMA organizes training to develop the potential of volunteer groups to enable them to perform their duties efficiently.

Table 10: Types and Number of Volunteers in BMA Related to Social Services

Volunteer Types	Department/Work Area	Number	Note
Volunteers working with children and youth	Social Development Office	28	Daily rate of pay: 300 baht per day
Volunteers at the Coordination and Assistance Center for Homeless People in Public Areas of Bangkok	Social Development Office	12	The monthly compensation rate is 15,000 baht per month.
Volunteer for social development	50 district offices	100	The monthly compensation rate is 15,000 baht per month.
Volunteers assist with social welfare in the area	50 district offices	50	Daily rate of pay: 300 baht per day
Volunteers working with persons with disabilities	50 districts	100	Daily rate of pay: 300 baht per day
	Total	290	

It is important to note that Thailand has several types of volunteers, comprising both formal and informal groups affiliated with various organizations. Given that a single volunteer may assume multiple roles across different programs, this assessment focuses mainly on social welfare volunteers mobilised by Government agencies, particularly SDHSVs and BMAVs, to provide a preliminary estimate of the volunteer workforce involved in social service–related activities.

³ In addition to BMA, another special administration area that has special type of volunteer is Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) that has graduated volunteer to coordinate between government and community in the SBP area (https://www.sbpac.go.th/home/?page_id=139388). Moreover, SPBAC also has a special position for professional social services worker call Rehabilitation Officer (require bachelor degree) that focuses on support those affected by unrest situation in SBPs (https://www.sbpac.go.th/home/?page_id=5466).

4.1.3.3 Allied Professionals

The Global Social Service Workforce Alliance's Guidelines for the Definition of the Social Workforce, in conjunction with UNICEF, defines the term: Allied Professionals as professionals and paraprofessionals involved in sectors such as education, health, or justice, who have critical roles related to care, support, prevention, empowerment, and protection and promotion of the rights of people. They work alongside the social service workforce but are aligned with other professional groups, such as doctors, nurses, lawyers, judges, teachers, and police (GSSWA & UNICEF 2019). Although they play a role in child protection, other multidisciplinary professionals are excluded from the social service workforce.

In the context of Thailand, this study found that the other related professions working alongside social workers are diverse. The medical personnel team in health services includes doctors, nurses, physical therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, etc. In the justice context, personnel such as lawyers, probation officers, and detention officers are considered other related professions. In the context of education, there are personnel such as educational specialists and educational supervisors. These personnel are reported by the agency through the agency survey or directly surveyed with practitioners to determine whether they have a social work dimension in their work.

Therefore, “allied professional” means a person with responsibilities for work not directly related to the social service function. However, data from surveys of social service practitioners indicate that many interdisciplinary professionals identify with social service functions, whether in a primary, secondary, delegated, or even substituting role.

4.1.4 Number of social service workers in the government sector

Data collected through a survey of government organizations on the number of social service workers—categorized by the standardized definition—were analysed by classifying personnel into three main groups: professionals, paraprofessionals, and volunteers.

The government agencies surveyed provided information on personnel within each group, categorized according to the defined social service workforce categories: professional, paraprofessional, and volunteer. **Table 11** summarizes the number of social service workers across these categories. According to data from surveyed government agencies, 13,157 professional workers are engaged in delivering social services, of whom 4,492 are titled social workers, regardless of whether they hold a social work professional license.

Additionally, the workforce comprises 302 paraprofessional workers who support service delivery through various tasks at the primary and secondary levels. Notably, the largest group comprises 387,490 volunteers who contribute to various community-level social service activities. This distribution highlights the significant reliance on volunteerism in the social service system. While it can be difficult to directly regulate the conduct of volunteers, the GSSWA guideline specifies that it must remain the responsibility of the organization, professionals, and paraprofessionals to utilize the services of volunteers, ensuring that volunteers have the requisite. It underscores the need for tailored strategies to support, coordinate, and enhance the effectiveness of each workforce category.

Table 12 provides additional information on the distribution of SDHSV, disaggregated by geographical area. The number of SDHS Volunteers is relatively evenly distributed across the regions, except in the Bangkok area, where it is significantly lower. This is because BMA has its own volunteers, as shown in **Table 10**.

As presented in **Table 13**, Allied professionals refer to individuals identified by government agencies who provide social services. However, based on the agreed-upon definition of social service workers and allied professionals, these individuals are classified as allied professionals as they work in collaboration with social service workers but belong to other professions and are not considered part of the core social service workforce.

Table 11: Number of Professional Social Workers, Paraprofessional, and Volunteers by Affiliation⁴

Cadre	Responsibility	Title/Agency	MSDHS	MoH	MoJ	MoL	MoD	MoE	RTP	BMA	MoHESI	MoI	Total	
Professional	Complex Secondary or Higher	Social Worker	3,325	493	298	3	11	-	10	318	34	- ⁴	4,492	
		Para-social worker	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	70	-	-	70
		Public Health Assistant (Social Welfare Mission)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24	-	-	24
		Social Work Sergeant	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Primary or secondary	Social Development Worker	875	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	426	-	-	1,301
		Community Development Specialist	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,267	5,267
		Child Welfare Officer	73	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	73
		Labour Specialist	-	-	-	869	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	869
		Probation officer	-	-	1,060	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,060
	Total-Professional			4,273	493	1,358	872	12	-	10	838	34	5,267	13,157
Paraprofessional	Primary	Social Development Officer	89	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	89	
		Community Development Officer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	213	213	
	Total Paraprofessional-Total			89	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	213	302	
Volunteer	Implementation	SDHS Volunteer	387,200	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	387,200	
		BMA Volunteer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	290	-	-	290
	Total-Volunteer			387,200	-	-	-	-	-	-	290	-	387,490	
Total 3 Cadres of Workforce (Professional/Paraprofessional/Volunteer)			391,562	493	1,358	872	12	-	10	1,128	34	5,480	400,949	

⁴ While the survey data provided by MOI data informants do not include any number of social workers, the SWPC data through One Platform in Table 3 reflects 104 licensed social workers under MOI (likely LAOs)

Table 12 : Number and Percentage of Social Development and Human Security Volunteers (SDHSV), disaggregated by geographical area

Region	Number of Volunteers	Percentage
Bangkok	7,900	2.04
Central	90,389	23.34
North	90,306	23.32
Northeast	133,422	34.46
South	65,183	16.83
Total	387,200	100.00

Source: Division of Volunteer and Civil Society Affairs, Department of Social Development and Welfare, MSDHS (2024).

Table 13: Number of Allied Professionals Classified by Affiliation

Title/Agency	MSDHS	MoH	MoJ	MoL	MoD	MoE	RTP	BMA	MoHESO	MoI	Total
Assigned to Welfare Division 2	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Professional/Technical Nurse	7	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	13	-	25
Nurse Aide / Practical Nurse	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	20
Nursing Support Staff	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
Dentist	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Medical Doctor	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	1	-	6
Traditional Thai Medicine Practitioner	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	-	16
Pharmacist	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	3
Pharmaceutical Technician	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	3
Medical Technologist	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	5
Medical Scientist	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	-	13
Occupational Therapist	-	-	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
Physiotherapist	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Health Educator	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Scientist	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Psychologist	105	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	105
Occupational Therapy Assistant	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

Title/Agency	MSDHS	MoH	MoJ	MoL	MoD	MoE	RTP	BMA	MoHESO	MoI	Total
Caregiver	104	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	104
Childcare Support Staff	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
Social Development/ Service Project Support Staff	24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24
Researcher	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	9
Research Officer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	9
Legal Officer	35	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35
Vocational Training Instructor	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Data Entry Officer	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Academic Officer in Education / Education Administrator / Education Supervisor / Human Resource Officer / Policy and Planning Analyst	-	-	-	-	-	838	-	-	34	-	872
General Administration Officer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	-	14
Administrative Assistant	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
General Service Worker	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2

4.1.5 Workforce, roles, and challenges of Thailand’s PBOs

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), also known as Public Benefit Organizations (PBOs) in Thailand, play a diverse and vital role in delivering social services across the country. While 5,486 NGOs are officially registered as PBOs under the Social Welfare Promotion Act 2009 (Office of the National Commission on Social Welfare Promotion 2025), the actual number of private sector and civil society organizations providing social services is likely higher. These organizations have different missions and scopes of services. Registered PBOs are granted several legal, financial, and administrative benefits. These are designed to support and incentivize civil society and non-governmental actors that provide social welfare services in alignment with national development goals.

As per the Social Welfare Promotion Act, foundations or associations applying for certification as PBOs must meet specific criteria, including at least six months of continuous social welfare activities and outcomes, a head office located in the application area for at least six months, regular personnel or volunteers or knowledgeable consultants in social welfare, and clearly defined methods for providing services such as promotion, development, welfare, protection, prevention, or rehabilitation.

As part of this assessment, a survey was sent to 483 PBOs registered under the SW Promotion Act. A total of 81 responses were received, of which 80 were considered for the analysis as one was incomplete (16.56% of the survey sent out). The highest number of responses came from organizations working with the elderly (31 responses, 38.75%), followed by those affiliated with local government and Social Development and Human Security Volunteers (15 responses, 18.75%).

Although the response rate was lower than expected, the data offer useful insights into target groups and operational structures of these organizations. PBOs that responded to the survey reported working with a wide range of groups, including the elderly, persons with disabilities, people with mental illness, children and youth, women and families, labour, people on probation, the homeless, the sick and poor, people living with HIV, disaster victims, and community groups like SDHVs (**Annex L**).

The survey also showed that PBO workers had diverse roles. Many were in leadership positions—such as presidents, vice presidents, directors, or chairpersons—and might not work directly with the target groups. However, some roles, like community development officers or volunteers, did engage directly with these populations. In total, 2,748 workers were reported, but there was no indication that any were professional or licensed social workers.

However, SWPC information on One Platform shows 143 licensed social workers from Non-Profit Organizations and 39 from Thai Red Cross, totaling 10.5% of the total licensed social workers registered with One Platform. In addition, the Task Group for this assessment, which includes some private-sector representatives, found that many organizations are not registered under the Social Welfare Promotion Act and were therefore not included in the survey sample. Yet, these organizations—such as the Center for the Protection of Children's Rights Foundation (CPCR), Save the Children Thailand, and the Duangprateep Foundation—reported having licensed social workers. Some of them have only a few professionals and rely heavily on volunteers, especially when working with target groups in remote or hard-to-reach communities.

Private sector and PBOs often face challenges in securing budgets to meet the needs of their target groups, as their operations rely heavily on project-based funding from both domestic and international sources. Social service workers in these sectors typically work with a high degree of independence, but often without consistent oversight or support from government agencies. While NGOs can apply for financial support through the Social Welfare Fund by meeting specific criteria and procedures, there is currently no formal system in place for government agencies to outsource or reimburse PBOs or their workers for services provided. Developing such a mechanism could enhance service sustainability and strengthen collaboration between sectors.

As shown in **Table 14**, a survey of PBOs reveals the diverse and vital roles played by PBOs in supporting a wide range of vulnerable and at-risk populations in Thailand, including the elderly, persons with disabilities, children and youth, laborers, probationers, disaster victims, and marginalized community members. Each target group benefits from specific programs designed to promote welfare, inclusion, and improve the quality of life. PBOs engage in direct service provision, capacity-building activities, and coordination with various government and non-government partners. Notably, volunteers play a significant role in service delivery, especially in contexts where professional workforce coverage is limited. The roles of PBOs often include organizing community-based activities, facilitating access to government welfare schemes, and providing emergency assistance during disasters.

Moreover, the table shows that PBOs consistently invest in capacity development for their personnel and volunteers through training programs delivered by both government and private-sector partners. These programs cover a broad range of skills, including elder care, youth mentorship, IT literacy, lifesaving techniques, and legal knowledge relevant to service delivery. Training is often tailored to the needs of the target group and the responsibilities of the volunteer or staff member. Additionally, **Annex J** shows roles, responsibilities, network partners and development of personnel plan in PBOs.


Table 14: Roles, Responsibilities, Network Partners and Capacity Development of Personnel in PBOs

Target group	Role and responsibilities	Network Partners	Capacity Development
Elderly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide care, support and assistance in welfare and quality of life development for the elderly who are members of the club and the elderly who live in the club area. • Organize activities for the elderly in the club area. • Request for budget support from the government to organize activities for the elderly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local administrative organizations • Department of Older Persons Affairs, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security • Provincial Social Development and Human Security (PSDHS) • Universities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in capacity-building activities conducted by partner agencies, including the integrated initiative to mobilize the Human Security Emergency Management Center (HuSEC) • Participate in training on how to care for the elderly conducted by public health agencies, training on how to use information technology systems
Persons with Disabilities	Provide assistance to persons with disability to enable them to access welfare and improve their quality of life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational institutions in the area • Khun Phum Foundation and private organizations 	Participate in training with various networks, etc.
Persons with mental illness	No information provided	No information provided	Participate in training by the Thai Association for the Persons with Mental Disability.
Children, youth, women and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize activities to develop the potential of children and youth in various fields. • Develop projects to enhance the potential of families in the community and promote relationships between families and families with teenagers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundations/ private organizations / independent groups for children and youth (e.g. Path2H Foundation (P2H) Foundation for Creative Innovation in Society (SIY) • Children and Youth Council of Thailand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in training from government agencies to provide knowledge and develop personnel and organizations in caring for/organizing activities for children and youth. • Participate in training to develop skills for mentor/ consultation/ communication/ facilitator
Labor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping workers in the community • Develop the potential of labor volunteers in their area and nearby areas. 	No information provided	Participate in training organized by the Provincial Labor Office.
Person on probation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide assistance to offenders during and after probation. • -Supervise probationers to carry out social services. • Perform as assigned by the Provincial Probation Officer, such as monitoring, following up, and providing assistance to offenders in the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial Probation Office • Provincial Social Development and Human Security (PSDHS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers must have completed the probation volunteer training course and be appointed by the Director-General of the Department of Probation before starting to work. • Participate in the volunteer probation development training organized by the Provincial probation office.

4.2 Overview of Workforce Development and Training

4.2.1 Availability of different levels of education and training

Social service workers in each group must meet different educational qualifications, although the Social Work Profession Act 2013 stipulates this in Section 10 (2) that social worker has completed at least a bachelor’s degree in social work or a bachelor’s degree in other fields of study that the Social Work Professional Council has certified and trained, with work experience involved in the protection, consultation, advice, promotion and support of children, youth and women, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and the disadvantage, following the standards set by the Social Work Profession Council (SWPC). However, the Civil Service Commission’s position standards have a broader scope. This may be because the Civil Service Commission’s position standards were set in 2011, which was before the enactment of the Social Work Profession Act. Therefore, the educational qualifications are inconsistent (Table 15).

Table 15: Comparison of Educational Qualifications Specified in the Office of Civil Service Commission’s Position Standards

Social Worker	Social Development Officer	Community Development Specialist	Community development Worker
Bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctorate degree, or other qualifications at the same level in any field of psychology, social work, social and behavioral sciences, political science, or one or more of the above fields, in a way that the relevant government agency deems appropriate to the duties, responsibilities, and nature of the work performed, or other fields that the Civil Service Commission has determined to be specific qualifications for this position.	Bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctorate degree, or other equivalent qualifications at the same level in a field of study or that the relevant government agency deems appropriate for the duties, responsibilities, or nature of the work performed, or have received a degree or other qualifications that the Civil Service Commission has determined can be used as specific qualifications for this position.	Bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctorate degree, or other equivalent qualifications at the same level in a field of study or that the relevant government agency deems appropriate for the duties, responsibilities, or nature of the work performed, or have received a degree or other qualifications that the Civil Service Commission has determined can be used as specific qualifications for this position.	Vocational certificate, technical vocational certificate, or advanced vocational certificate, or other qualifications equivalent to the same level in a field of study or path that the relevant government agency deems appropriate for the duties, responsibilities, and nature of the work performed, or have received a certificate or other qualifications that the Civil Service Commission has determined can be used as specific qualifications for this position.

When reviewing the position standards set by the Civil Service Commission, which outline the required educational qualifications for key roles within the social service workforce, notable differences can be observed. Specifically, the position of social worker requires more specialized educational qualifications compared to roles such as social development officers, community development specialists, and community development officers. This distinction reflects the more targeted and professionalized nature of the social work role within the broader social service system.

In analyzing the readiness of educational institutions in preparing social service workers, a clear analysis can be made only in the field of social work, since the positions of social development worker, community development specialist, social development officer, and community development officer are not required a specific field of study, or it can be said that they accept people with a wide range of educational qualifications (**Table 15**), while at present in Thailand the field of social work is offered at the bachelor's and master's degree levels in six institutions are: 1) Thammasat University, 2) Huachiew Chalermprakiet University, 3) Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University, 4) Mahamakut Buddhist University, 5) Chulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya University, and 6) Prince of Songkla University (Pattani Campus), the level of programs offered by each university are included in **Table 16**.

Table 16: Information on the Curriculum of the Social Work Program and Graduate Production

University	Faculty	Degree	Duration of study (years)	Field Experience ⁵	Number of admissions ⁶	Year of most recent graduation	Number of graduates	Year of commencement of teaching
Thammasat	Social Administration	Bachelor of Social Work	4	1,200 hrs.	373	2023	332	1957
		Master of Social Work	2	800 hours	26	2023	12	1961
Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University	Social Sciences and Local Development	Bachelor of Social Work	4	1,280 hrs.	36	2023	12	2017
Huachiew Chalermprakiat	Social Work and Social Welfare	Bachelor of Social Work	4	1,220 hrs.	27	2023	27	1990
		Master of Social Work and Social Welfare Administration	2	800 hours	5	2023	1	2013
Mahamakut Buddhist University	Social Science	Bachelor of Social Work	4	1,290 hrs.	11 (2020 data)	2024	15	2011
Mahamakut Buddhist University, Northeastern Campus	Social Science	Bachelor of Social Work	4	1,290 hrs.	9	2023	10	2011
Songkhla Nakarin (Pattani Campus)	Humanities and Social Sciences	Bachelor of Social Work	4	1,200 hrs.	49	2023	50	2012
Total					536		459	

Note : Data from Chulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya University is missing.

⁵ Field experience can take up to approximately four months to complete the requirement.

⁶ Information from Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation Year 2019

According to data from a survey to educational institutions that offer social work programs, in the latest academic year (2023-2024), five out of six educational institutions responded to the survey: 1) Thammasat University, 2) Huachiew Chalermprakiet University, 3) Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University, 4) Mahamakut Buddhist University, and 5) Prince of Songkla University (Pattani Campus). Mahamakut Buddhist University divided the survey into two campuses. From the information received, it was found that it could produce a number of 459 graduates (from the target as per opening seats of 536 people), divided into six bachelor's degree programs and two master's degree programs, with no doctoral degree program in social work at present.

In addition, the Social Work Professions Council has its power under Section 6(8) of the Social Work Profession Act B.E. 2556 to certify degrees of various institutions for the benefit of applying for general membership under Section 10(2) and to be able to take the examination to be a licensed social worker. The Social Work Professions Council, therefore, considers the certification of degrees based on the content of the curriculum to see if they comply with professional standards. This means that the content of the social work program is filtered to ensure that graduates from the curriculum are prepared with knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes before starting work.

All social work programs in Thailand require students to complete a field practicum in social welfare agencies or communities, typically ranging from 800 to 1,290 hours in total, divided into 2-3 field practicum courses of 3-4 months each, as a prerequisite for graduation. The regular duration of study is four years for the bachelor's degree and two years for the master's degree. The standard minimum requirement of 800 hours of field practicum was originally established through a consensus among educational institutions offering social work programs, in collaboration with the Thailand Association of Social Work and Social Welfare Education (TASWE). Although these jointly developed program standards have since been cancelled and no new national guidelines for curriculum development have been formally announced, the 800-hour field practicum benchmark remains widely observed in practice. Moreover, the Social Work Professions Council currently utilizes this 800-hour field practicum standard, along with other standard components, process for social work degree programs.

In this assessment, a survey was sent to six universities to specify curricula related to the production of social service workers other than the social work curriculum within the same institution. Only two institutions provided response information: Thammasat University (Faculty of Sociology and Anthropology and Puey Ungphakorn School of Development Studies) and Huachiew Chalermprakiet University (Faculty of Social Work and Social Welfare), which specified information about related curriculum. Of the nine programs, from the information received, it was found that the main difference between those programs from the social work program is the determination of practical study experiences in the program, with seven out of the nine programs not specifying field practicum or internships requirement, with only the Bachelor of Arts program (Interdisciplinary studies program) of the College of Interdisciplinary Studies and the Bachelor program under the Puey Ungphakorn School of Development Studies, which require one semester and 560 hours of field practicum (the number of training hours is not specified) respectively (**Table 17-18**).

Table 17: Information on Other Social Studies Programs

University	Faculty	Degree	Duration of study (years)	Field Experience	Required Field Experience Hours	Number of admissions ⁷	Year of most recent graduation	Number of graduates	Year of commencement of teaching
Thammasat	Sociology and Anthropology	Bachelor of Sociology and Anthropology	4	Not require	0	104 (2018 data)	2022	97	1965
		Bachelor of Sociology and Anthropology (Social Research)	4	Not require	0	97	2023	88	2008
		Master of Sociology and Anthropology (Social Research)	2	Not require	0	7 (2018 data)	2022	2	2011
		of Sociology and Anthropology (Anthropology)	2 and a half years	Not require	0	10	2023	3	1986
		PhD (Anthropology)	2 and a half years	Not require	0	2 (2018 data)	2022	1	2008
		PhD (Sociology and Anthropology)	2 and a half years	Not require	0	0	do not have	0	2023
	Puey Ungphakorn School of Development Studies	B.A Department of Human and Social Development Innovation	4	Required	560 hrs.	86	2023	71	2016
College of Interdisciplinary Studies	B.A Interdisciplinary Studies	4	Required	1 semester	172	2023	84	1999	
Huachiew Chalermprakiat	jurisprudence	Bachelor of Laws	4	Not require	0	20	2023	132	2005

⁷ Information from Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation Year 2019

Table 18: Challenges in Management of the Social Work Program

University	Program	Degree Name	Degree level	Challenges in teaching management			
				Program management (number of teachers/ budget)	Teaching management (materials and equipment/readiness of teaching area/ practice area)	Safety in the area	Lecturers of the course (Qualifications/ Number/Potential development)
Thammasat	Social Work (SW)	Bachelor of SW	Bachelor	✓	✓		
		Master of SW	Master	✓	✓		
Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University	Social Sciences and Local Development	Bachelor of Social Work	Bachelor		✓		✓
Huachiew Chalermprakit	Social Work and Social Welfare	Bachelor of Social Work	Bachelor				
		Master of Social Work (Social Welfare Administration Program)	Master	✓			✓
Mahamakut Buddhist University	social science	Bachelor of Social Work	Bachelor				✓
Mahamakut Buddhist University, Northeastern Campus	social science	Bachelor of Social Work	Bachelor	✓			✓
Songkhla Nakarin (Pattani Campus)	Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	Bachelor of Social Work	Bachelor	✓		✓	✓

Note : Data from Chulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya University.

When asked about personnel challenges in the social work educational program, a total of 8 programs from 6 educational institutions found five programs to have identified challenges related to limited resources in their operations, which affects the quality and efficiency of teaching management, including training students' essential skills. In addition, the four programs also addressed the challenges associated with low salaries for personnel in this field, which are not commensurate with the large workloads they have to undertake. These may result in problems in retaining quality personnel and developing human resources in the long term. This makes it imperative for educational institutions to consider solutions to support their people and create a conducive work environment, with no institution identifying challenges regarding low decision-making authority, lack of advancement, information management systems, training, and collaboration with other agencies **(Figure 4)**

Figure 4: Personnel Challenges of the Social Work Educational Program *(Number of programs)*



Furthermore, there is a lack of clear and systematic guidelines for the integration of local and indigenous knowledge, such as Islamic and Malay-Muslim Cultural Norms (in the Southern Border Provinces) and Indigenous Knowledge of Ethnic Minorities (e.g., Karen, Hmong, Akha), into the development and preparation of social service workers, both at the pre-service and in-service levels. Current social work curricula and training programs do not sufficiently equip practitioners to work effectively in culturally specific contexts, such as with migrant populations, indigenous communities, or within the Islamic cultural setting in Thailand's deep south.

Focus group data from social service workers show that working in areas with ethnic groups or migrant workers is difficult due to the lack of attention to cultural differences in workforce planning and development. There is a growing need to include cultural understanding, language support, and cooperation between agencies in both planning and frontline work. To provide inclusive and effective services, Thailand must address the shortage of qualified interpreters, build knowledge about diverse communities, and strengthen partnerships with universities and international organizations.

“ When we actually go to the field, we have a team like Mae Hong Son and Nan, which has a hill tribe development center, which we used to call the Hill Tribe Center. There are civil servants, employees, or Hmong staff. There are also Hmong or Khmu people. In the past, we would ask them to go to the area and to help with translation. At least they were Hmong so that they could communicate. This is considered a tool. Nowadays, most of these people are starting to retire. We will be short of interpreters. There is a lack of people who understand this culture to help us learn from lessons or prepare for the time we go to the field ”

(Practitioners from government agencies, focus group of social service workers)

“ Today in the southern region, it will be a similar point where it is a rest stop and a destination. Today, in addition to the issues of various ethnic groups, and then we have the Rohingya these days. In the past, we had Rohingya, and we have Uyghur. We have to learn a lot about their way of life. ”

(Practitioners from government agencies, focus group of social service workers)

“ But fortunately, (name of the informant's agency) also has an office in Burma. There is communication between the coordinators of each other. To see the origin of this group, and there may be some staff who have been to Rakhine State or have been to areas where they have seen the context of what life is like there. But when it comes to working with this group in Myanmar, where we go to do it ourselves, it has to be in the “Low Profile Anonymous” form. It is impossible to tell who we are and what we are doing there. Because in terms of human rights on the Myanmar side, it may not be stable for us to go to work yet. Therefore, when you start working, there are quite a few limitations. But when they arrived in Thailand, we worked with the agency that was the main agency that had to take care of them first. (Name of the informant's organization) works in a support system to facilitate a process for assisting the Rohingya group, and then we look at what services we have that can help. Or what additional services should we add? Or where can we get those services?... We have coordinated with international agencies that need to be involved, such as the UN or UNICEF, to support the work of this group. We cannot work alone as a single agency. Or even the matter of Rohingya interpreters, we still have to coordinate with the group that has the Rohingya association, and immediately we will have the issue of training interpreters to understand the contextual problem of human trafficking and what it is, to understand what the impact is on this group of people, and what does the interpreter have to do? We were lucky to have an interpreter expert from Chulalongkorn University's Interpreting Center, the Faculty of Arts came to provide support ”

(Practitioners from government agencies, focus group of social service workers)

4.2.2 Diverse training access for social service workers

Promoting continuous training to develop the knowledge and skills of social service professionals results in higher quality services and more efficient response to the needs of service recipients. It is based on this fact that different national social work associations globally have adopted standards for continuous education for social workers which are mostly linked to the Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training from IFSW and IASSW. (IFSW & IASSW 2020) Continuous education and training builds confidence of the social service workers, improves their work and positively affects workers' quality of working life. However, the assessment found that conditions or opportunities for training to increase social service workers' knowledge are diverse, lack coherence, depending on professional requirements (if any) and the nature of employment.

Social workers in the public sector, both civil servants and government employees, can access training to enhance their knowledge. Generally, training is provided pre- and in-service training to enhance their skills and abilities. For some agencies, training participation may be considered an indicator of personnel efficiency and development by specifying the number of training courses that must be attended annually. This must be supported by the budget from the agency or permitted to attend training organized by other agencies without it being considered as leave days. However, as mentioned above, most social service workers who are contract employees or daily employees (e.g. in the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration) do not receive support in accessing training to enhance their knowledge organized by organizations outside their own agency.

Contract employees in the public sector are often limited in their ability to receive training or enhance their knowledge because they receive a fixed compensation rate. This limitation may affect the quality of their work and the efficiency of their services. In addition, access to scholarships or budgets for training may also be limited, preventing contract employees from developing their potential as much as they should. Therefore, policy improvements and support for these employees to access learning opportunities are essential to further improve the quality of work in the civil service.

For licensed social workers, according to the Social Work Profession Act 2013, social workers must comply with the conditions set by the Social Work Profession Council for license renewal in every five years. Such license renewal requires the accumulation of 50 continuing education credits, which can be obtained from participating in various academic and professional activities, such as attending training or seminars, being a lecturer, joining a multidisciplinary committee, conducting research, studying in short courses, continuing to study at the graduate level, or providing services to society, etc. This mechanism encourages licensed social workers to study and develop their knowledge and skills continuously, an essential foundation for improving the quality of social work services and practices to be up-to-date and most effective in responding to the needs of service recipients and society. However, even if social workers are licensed social workers, if they work as contract or temporary employees, they will often encounter limitations regarding welfare and opportunities to access training to increase their knowledge, as mentioned above.

4.2.3 Workers’ Perception of Readiness and Access to In-service Development Opportunities

4.2.3.1 Readiness of Workers

Social service workers who responded to the survey included professionals, paraprofessionals, and volunteers with various backgrounds. Workers’ perceptions of their readiness to practice varied depending on several factors.

Table 19 shows the results of the survey of social service workers’ perceptions of their competence in performing their duties in five main areas: 1) the ability to identify potential abuse, exploitation, neglect, or violence that will occur to the service users, 2) Knowledge to appropriately respond to and help children and families affected by abuse, exploitation, neglect, or violence 3) knowledge to facilitate an assessment of needs and strengths of clients and families, that includes aspects of health, education, social protection and child protection, 4) The ability to actively engage clients in developing a case plan to address their strengths and needs and 5) the ability to make referrals to available programs and services for the population of clients that you serve.

Table 19: Perceived Competency of Social Service Workers (percent)

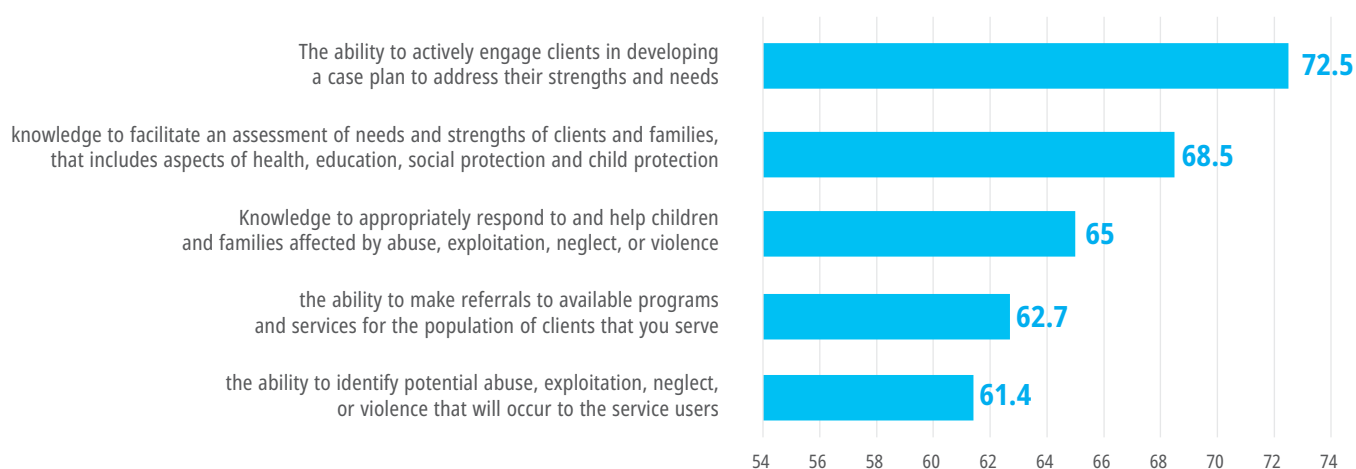
Issue	Very competent	Competent	Somewhat competent	Not at all	Does not apply to my work
1) the ability to identify potential abuse, exploitation, neglect, or violence that will occur to the service users	10.9	50.5	30.7	4.9	3.1
2) Knowledge to appropriately respond to and help children and families affected by abuse, exploitation, neglect, or violence	10.6	54.4	27.8	3.7	3.5
3) knowledge to facilitate an assessment of needs and strengths of clients and families, that includes aspects of health, education, social protection and child protection	11.3	57.2	26.6	2.4	2.4
4) The ability to actively engage clients in developing a case plan to address their strengths and needs	11.3	61.2	23.2	2.4	1.8
5) The ability to make referrals to available programs and services for the population of clients that you serve	8.9	53.8	28.6	5.4	3.4

Note: n=654, Missing =47

Overall, very few respondents (4.9-5.4%) indicated that they were not competent in performing the task, while less than half stated that they were sometimes competent (23.2-30.7%). The majority (more than 60%) reported being very competent. The group that stated that they do not apply to their work is very few (1.8-3.5 percent).

Figure 5 indicates that a high percentage of social care practitioners who identified themselves as “competent and very competent” in the top three domains of 1) competent to actively engage clients in developing a case plan to address their strengths and needs (72.5%), and 2) competent to facilitate an assessment of clients’ and families’ needs and strengths, including aspects of health, education, social protection and child protection (68.5 percent) and 3) competent to appropriately respond to and help children and families affected by abuse, exploitation, neglect, or violence (65 percent), while the final rank is the ability to identify potential abuse, exploitation, neglect, or violence that will occur to the service users (61.4 percent).

Figure 5: Percentage of Social Service Workers Reporting Competency (Competent⁸ and ‘Very Competent’ Only)



To provide more clarity in the analysis of the relationship between the characteristics of the respondents and their level of knowledge and competency to perform their work (**Table 20**), when analyzing the relationship between educational qualifications and work ability using statistics Pearson Chi- Square at the significance level of 0.01 or 0.05 to be able to make proposals about planning and supporting the workforce of social workers. The findings indicate that when compare workers with different educational qualifications (any degree in social work, degree in social science, degree in science, and others below bachelor’s degree) have a statistically significant relationship with the self-assessment on competency of social service workers. (Competent - Very Competent and Incompetent - Somewhat Competent)⁸ in all respects, 1) the ability to identify potential abuse, exploitation, neglect, or violence that will occur to the service users, 2) Knowledge to appropriately respond to and help children and families affected by abuse, exploitation, neglect, or violence 3) knowledge to facilitate an assessment of needs and strengths of clients and families, that includes aspects of health, education, social protection and child protection, 4) The ability to actively engage clients in developing a case plan to address their strengths and needs and 5) the ability to make referrals to available programs and services for the population of clients that you serve.

When comparing two educational groups—those with degrees in social work and those with degrees in general social science (**Table 21**) - the Pearson Chi-Square test (at a significance level of 0.01 or 0.05) showed that self-rated competency levels were linked to the respondent’s field of study. Social work graduates were significantly more likely to rate themselves as “Competent - Very Competent” compared to “Incompetent - Somewhat Competent.” In contrast, among those with general social science degrees, there was no significant difference between the two groups of self-assessments.

This difference was especially evident in four key areas: 1) the ability to identify potential abuse, exploitation, neglect, or violence that will occur to the service users, 2) Knowledge to appropriately respond to and help children and families affected by abuse, exploitation, neglect, or violence 3) knowledge to facilitate an assessment of needs and strengths of clients and families, that includes aspects of health, education, social protection and child protection, 4) the ability to make referrals to available programs and services for the population of clients that you serve. Only one aspect, the ability to actively engage clients in developing a case plan to address their strengths and needs and, was not significantly different among those with a degree in social work compared to those with a general social sciences degree.

However, when examining the relationship between holding a social work license and perceived competency (**Table 22**), the results showed that licensed social workers consistently rated themselves as having “Competent to Very Competent” levels of knowledge and skills across all areas, more so than those without a license. A Chi-square test confirmed that this relationship was statistically significant at the 0.01 level, indicating that having a social work license is strongly associated with higher levels of self-assessed competence.

⁸ The grouping was reduced from the original 4 competent levels to 2 levels by combining the numbers within the groups to meet the condition of using the Pearson Chi- Square statistic that the expected frequency in each group should not be less than 5.

Table 20: The Relationship Between Educational Qualifications and Competency of Social Service Workers

Competency	Competent-Very Competent	Not Competent - Somewhat Competent	Pearason Chi- Square	Pearason Chi- Square
1. Competency in your knowledge to identify potential abuse, exploitation, neglect, or violence (n=569, missing 132)				
Any degree in Social Work	151	49	18.822**	Statistically significant at 0.01 level
Degree in Social Sciences	155	117		
Degree in science and other (below bachelor's degree)	56	41		
2. Competency in in knowledge to appropriately respond to and help children and families affected by abuse, exploitation, neglect, or violence (n=568, missing 133)				
Any degree in Social Work	151	47	12.64**	Statistically significant at 0.01 level
Degree in Social Sciences	182	92		
Degree in science and other (below bachelor's degree)	54	42		
3. Competency in your knowledge to facilitate an assessment of needs and strengths of clients and families, that includes aspects of health, education, social protection and child protection (n=573, missing 128)				
Any degree in Social Work	159	40	10.696**	Statistically significant at 0.01 level
Degree in Social Sciences	192	84		
Degree in science and other (below bachelor's degree)	62	36		
4. Competency to actively engage clients in developing a case plan to address their strengths and needs (n=576, missing 125)				
Any degree in Social Work	162	40	4.208**	Statistically significant at 0.01 level
Degree in Social Sciences	200	76		
Degree in science and other (below bachelor's degree)	71	27		
5. Competency to make referrals to available programs and services for the population of clients that you serve (n=567, missing 134)				
Any degree in Social Work	145	56	6.934*	Statistically significant at 0.05 level
Degree in Social Sciences	164	107		
Degree in science and other (below bachelor's degree)	63	32		

Note : ** Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) <.001, * Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) <.005

Table 21: Relationship between Educational Qualifications and Knowledge and Skills of Social Service Workers

Competency	Competent-Very Competent	Not Competent - Somewhat Competent	Pearason Chi- Square	Summary of the relationship between educational qualifications and competency
1. Competency in your knowledge to identify potential abuse, exploitation, neglect, or violence (n=569, missing 132)				
Any degree in Social Work	151	49	17.328**	There is a statistically significant at the 0.01 level.
Degree in Social Sciences	155	117		
2. Competency in in knowledge to appropriately respond to and help children and families affected by abuse, exploitation, neglect, or violence (n=472)				
Any degree in Social Work	151	47	5.356*	There is a statistically significant at the 0.05 level.
Degree in Social Sciences	182	92		
3. Competency in your knowledge to facilitate an assessment of needs and strengths of clients and families, that includes aspects of health, education, social protection and child protection (n=475, Missing =226)				
Any degree in Social Work	159	40	6.402*	There is a statistically significant at the 0.05 level.
Degree in Social Sciences	192	84		
4. Competency to actively engage clients in developing a case plan to address their strengths and needs (n=487, Missing =223)				
Any degree in Social Work	162	40	3.796	There is <u>no</u> a statistically significant at the 0.05 level.
Degree in Social Sciences	200	76		
5. Competency to make referrals to available programs and services for the population of clients that you serve (n=472, Missing =229)				
Any degree in Social Work	145	56	6.896**	There is a statistically significant at the 0.01 level.
Degree in Social Sciences	164	107		

Note : ** Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) <.001, * Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) <.005

Table 22: Relationship Between License Holding and Competency of Social Service Workers

Competency	Competent-Very Competent	Not Competent - Somewhat Competent	Pearson Chi-Square	Summary of the relationship between license holding and competency
1. Competency in your knowledge to identify potential abuse, exploitation, neglect, or violence (n=260, missing 81)				
Have a social work professional license	156	44	27.165**	There is a statistically significant at the 0.01 level.
<u>Have no</u> a social work professional license	237	183		
2. Competency in in knowledge to appropriately respond to and help children and families affected by abuse, exploitation, neglect, or violence (n=618, missing 83)				
Have a social work professional license	167	34	33.673**	There is a statistically significant at the 0.01 level.
<u>Have no</u> a social work professional license	249	168		
3. Competency in your knowledge to facilitate an assessment of needs and strengths of clients and families, that includes aspects of health, education, social protection and child protection (n=265, missing 76)				
Have a social work professional license	174	31	30.686**	There is a statistically significant at the 0.01 level.
<u>Have no</u> a social work professional license	266	154		
4. Competency to actively engage clients in developing a case plan to address their strengths and needs (n=628, missing 73)				
Have a social work professional license	172	34	14.247**	There is a statistically significant at the 0.01 level.
<u>Have no</u> a social work professional license	293	129		
5. Competency to make referrals to available programs and services for the population of clients that you serve (n=618, missing 83)				
Have a social work professional license	158	46	21.099**	There is a statistically significant at the 0.01 level.
<u>Have no</u> a social work professional license	243	171		

Note : ** Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) <.001

4.2.3.2 Opportunities for access to development

As reflected in **Table 6**: Comparison of “Employment Benefits” in 5 Types of Bureaucracy that there is no difference in training expenses provided for different types of bureaucracy employment types. The survey of social service workers on the opportunities for development found that most workers agreed and strongly agreed that the top three most important factors were: receiving support from the employers to enable them to attend training, such as not counting training days as leave days (86.7%), followed by employers/units supporting their participation in various trainings related to social work (78.1%) , and being able to easily access training (convenient training venue or budget for travel) (71.6%). Overall, more than half of the social workers who responded to the questionnaire agreed and strongly agreed about training, meaning that they had the opportunity to access training or activities to increase their knowledge (**Table 23** and **Figure 6**)

However, qualitative data obtained from the survey indicated that social service workers indicated a need for access to continuous training through regular training programs and in terms of content that was relevant and consistent with their work, whether it was professional training or related to specific target groups that they had to work with, or the creation of individual development plans for workers.

“ Social workers who have been working for a period of time, such as 1-3 years, 3-5 years, or 5-10 years / specific work fields with target groups or service users should have a course to review knowledge or develop competencies appropriate to year of experiences to be able to work effectively. ”

(Information from the survey of social service workers)

“ There should be a budget to support each individual with clear development goals. ”

(Information from a survey of social service workers)

In terms of budget, on the budget reflect the inadequacy of the budget to support training and the need to prepare development/training plans in advance of the next fiscal year. Social service workers encounter problems and obstacles in requesting approval because sometimes they do not know the training courses to be offered in advance, with sufficient time to request authorization.

““ I would like the organization to have a budget sufficient for new civil servants to enhance their knowledge of operations appropriate for their positions. ””

(Information from a survey of social service workers)

““ Currently, there is almost no budget for training in local governments ... Even though it is set aside in the annual budget, it does not come in as planned when the deadline is. This is the main problem that local government personnel are currently facing. ””

(Information from a survey of social service workers)

““ Because data is currently essential in operations, I would like the central office to have central data that all units under the same ministry can integrate and manage under their agencies. (Information from a survey of social service workers) While online training has improved access to capacity-building opportunities, some practitioners report that it does not fully address local needs or allow for meaningful exchange of field experiences. To enhance its effectiveness, training should also aim to foster networks among practitioners within specific regions, promoting collaboration in multidisciplinary teams and strengthening support systems for diverse target groups. Additionally, training programs should be designed with flexible durations, considering the limited staffing capacity in many units, where staff must cover for one another during training periods. ””

““ There should be rotating experts in each profession to provide knowledge in each local government organization so that each area sees that NSC is an important profession that should be in every local government organization. ””

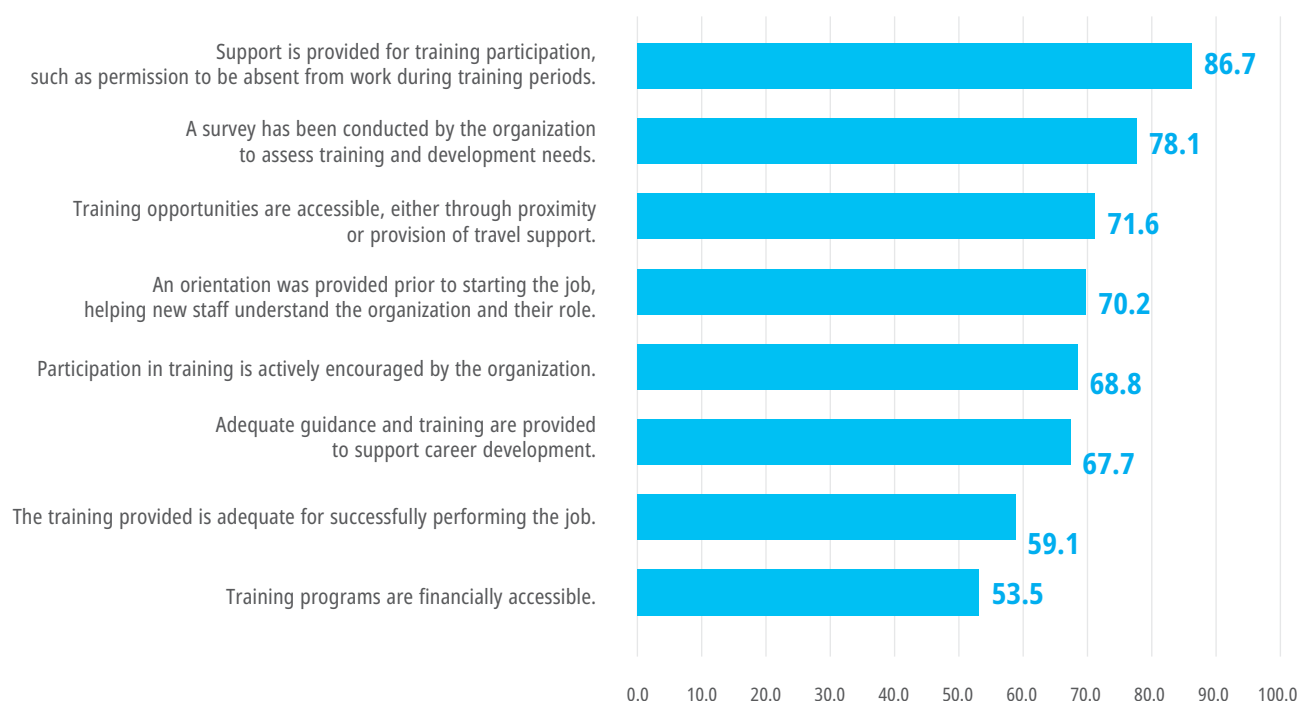
(Information from a survey of social service workers).

Table 23: Social Service Workers’ Opinions on Training (percent)

Training support	Opinion				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure or indifferent	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The training provided is adequate for successfully performing the job.	11.2	47.9	26.5	11.6	2.9
A survey has been conducted by the organization to assess training and development needs.	19.1	59.0	17.1	3.5	1.2
Participation in training is actively encouraged by the organization.	14.4	54.4	19.9	8.7	2.6
Support is provided for training participation, such as permission to be absent from work during training periods.	30.4	56.3	10.2	2.0	1.1
Training opportunities are accessible, either through proximity or provision of travel support.	19.6	52.0	19.9	5.5	3.1
Training programs are financially accessible.	14.1	39.4	23.2	16.7	6.6
Adequate guidance and training are provided to support career development.	15.4	52.3	23.2	6.4	2.6
An orientation was provided prior to starting the job, helping new staff understand the organization and their role.	15.3	54.9	19.6	6.7	3.5

Note: n=654, Missing 47

Figure 6: Percentage of Opinions at the Level of Agree and Strongly Agree about the Training



4.3 Overview of Workforce Support

4.3.1 Practitioner Perspectives on Challenges and Opportunities, Supervision Systems, and Career Advancement

Table 24 presents key challenges faced by the social service workforce, categorized by their level of agreement with various workforces issues. These can be grouped into themes relevant to workforce development and management. **Compensation and workload** are major concerns. Over 63% of respondents feel that salaries do not match their qualifications and experience, which may impact morale and retention. High workload is the most widely agreed-upon issue, with over 80% reporting this problem—likely due to staff shortages or growing responsibilities. **Motivation and career development** also present challenges. About 55% report low motivation, while nearly half (48.5%) see limited career advancement opportunities. Inadequate supervision and support are noted by 43%, suggesting a need for stronger mentoring and leadership. **Authority and role clarity** appear to vary by organization. Only around 40% agree these are issues, while over a quarter disagree. The high number of neutral responses may reflect unclear roles or limited communication within organizations.

Working conditions and resources show mixed experiences. While 45% report poor facilities, a similar portion disagrees, suggesting differences across regions or agencies. However, 71% agree that limited resources are a significant challenge, which could hinder frontline service delivery. **Training and information systems** are also areas of concern. Nearly 45% report a lack of professional knowledge and training opportunities, and 50% highlight weak data and record management systems, which may affect service quality and accountability. **Interagency collaboration** is one of the most divided issues: 34% agree it is ineffective, 32% disagree, and 30% are neutral. This highlights the need for more structured collaboration across sectors and points to inconsistent cooperation.

Table 24: Opinion on Major Challenges Faced in the Daily Work of Social Service Workers (percentage)

Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Salary rate is not consistent with qualifications and experience	26.1	37.1	24.1	9.9	2.7
high workload	38.9	41.7	13.7	5.0	.7
low motivation	22.7	32.6	23.7	17.4	3.6
low authority	10.7	30.2	27.0	28.0	4.0
lack of clarity in roles/performance expectations	10.8	28.5	23.5	31.2	5.7
poor work conditions/facilities	15.2	29.6	23.3	26.8	5.2
lack of career advancement opportunities	22.9	25.6	23.0	24.5	4.0
weak information management, records, data management	14.4	35.6	26.6	19.6	3.7
lack of training and professional knowledge	14.7	29.9	23.0	27.2	5.2
poor supervision and support system	14.2	29.2	25.9	27.3	3.4
limited resources to work with	25.0	45.9	12.7	14.9	1.4
ineffective interagency collaboration	8.4	25.2	29.5	31.5	5.4

Table 25 offers insight into the levels of satisfaction among social service workers in four key areas: compensation, availability of work resources, perceived impact of their work, and workplace safety. The responses reflect both the strengths and ongoing challenges faced by the workforce.

The data reveals a significant level of dissatisfaction regarding salary. Only 36.6% of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their current pay, either by agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement. In contrast, nearly 40% expressed dissatisfaction, with 29.2% disagreeing and 10.6% strongly disagreeing. A sizable portion (23.6%) selected “neither agree nor disagree,” suggesting uncertainty or resignation about salary conditions. This distribution indicates that compensation remains a critical concern for many workers and may be a contributing factor to lower morale and reduced motivation, especially among those with higher qualifications or demanding workloads.

When asked about the availability of necessary tools and equipment to perform their job effectively, 46.1% of respondents expressed satisfaction. However, this was balanced by 30.2% who disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 23.7% who remained neutral. These findings point to inconsistency in work conditions, suggesting that while some workplaces are adequately equipped, others may lack basic resources, potentially impacting the quality and efficiency of service delivery.

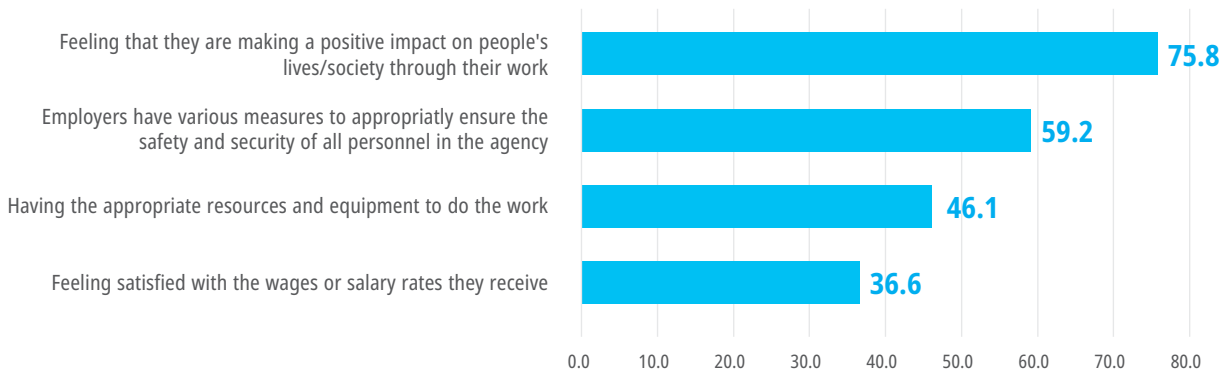
In term of perceived overall performance of their work (**Figure 7**), this area showed the highest levels of agreement. A strong majority—76% of respondents—felt that their work contributes positively to the lives of others, with 22.2% strongly agreeing and 53.8% agreeing. Only a small percentage (6%) expressed disagreement. This indicates that, despite operational or systemic challenges, most social service workers find meaning and purpose in their roles. This sense of impact can be a powerful source of intrinsic motivation and is a positive indicator of professional commitment.

In terms of safety and security, 59.2% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their workplace had adequate protective measures in place. However, over a quarter (27.3%) chose a neutral response, which may suggest that some workers are unsure about the safety protocols or do not feel fully informed or confident in their implementation. Meanwhile, 13.5% expressed dissatisfaction. This finding indicates room for improvement in safety communication, risk management, and infrastructure—particularly in high-risk or field-based environments.

Table 25: Opinion on Satisfaction of Social Service Workers

Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Satisfaction with current pay	6.0	30.6	23.6	29.2	10.6
Necessary supplies and equipment are available to perform job duties effectively.	6.6	39.5	23.7	24.2	6.0
The job is perceived as contributing positively to the lives of others.	22.2	53.8	18.2	4.9	1.1
Adequate measures have been implemented by the employer to ensure workplace safety and security.	12.0	47.2	27.3	10.9	2.6

Figure 7: Percentage of Social Service Workers Indicating That They Agree and Strongly Agree about the Overall Performance of Their Work



According to the survey, most social workers reported having a supervisor (82.2%) and receiving supervision or feedback that met their needs (83.3%). The majority (68.2%) met with their supervisor daily, and 17.9% met weekly. Supervision is essential for social work and social welfare. It supports and develops the potential of personnel. It also helps create quality service standards by supporting problem analysis and personnel decision-making (ASEAN 2023). This enables personnel to be better prepared and more confident in dealing with complex social problems. Supervision also promotes team collaboration, foster better relationships, and enables the exchange of knowledge and experiences to be more effective (GSSWA 2020) In addition, monitoring and evaluating the results of supervision can reflect the results and help improve the work process to meet the needs of service recipients more accurately. This results in better quality of life for the people and makes society more sustainable (ASEAN 2023).

The survey of social service workers found that most respondents (82.3 percent) indicated that they had a supervisor who supervised their work. And the majority (68.2 percent) said they met with supervisors daily. When asked whether the supervision or feedback system was effective and responsive, the majority (83.3 percent) of the respondents stated that the supervision or feedback system was effective and responsive.

Tables 26-29 show that more than 50% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they received support from their supervisors on various issues. The top three areas of support were: having clear performance expectations (83.1%), receiving support for ongoing training (81.5%), and discussing ethical issues at work (80.8%). The areas that seem to receive less support include Discuss/provide feedback on professional development and career goals, and Help support physical/mental health care and eliminate work-related stress.

Note that the survey has not differentiate between managerial supervision and technical supervision. Additional qualitative data from the survey of social service workers indicated several vital issues affecting operational efficiency, particularly the lack of explicit operational manuals and explanations of laws or regulations, which led to workers' different understandings of the work approach. In addition, the lack of budget support, time allocation, and procedures was a factor that delayed operations and prevented them from responding to social problems in due course.

In addition, the centralized guidelines are not consistent with the actual situation in the community, resulting in difficulties in performing work effectively. Supervisors or managers should have relevant qualifications and expertise and be able to provide supervision and advice on solving workers' problems effectively. Strong leadership, including practicing good governance in management and prioritizing work, will help social welfare operations be systematic and respond to the needs of service recipients more effectively.

Table 26: Having a Supervisor Who Oversees Work Performance

	Number	Percentage
Do not have	125	17.8
Have	576	82.2
Total	701	100

Table 27: System for monitoring or providing feedback on performance, and being able to respond to needs

	Number	Percentage
Cannot	112	16.7
Can	557	83.3
Total	669	100

Note : n=669, Missing =32

Table 28: Frequency of meeting with supervisors

Frequency	Number	Percentage
Every day	456	68.2
Every week	120	17.9
Every month	48	7.2
Quarterly	19	2.8
Never met	2	0.3
Other	24	3.6
Total	669	100.0

Note : n=669, Missing =32

Table 29: Support for Work Performance by Supervisors (percent)

Operational support by supervisors	Opinion				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure or Indifferent	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Clear performance expectations are set	22.7	60.4	14.1	2.1	0.7
Provide constructive or developmental feedback on work skills	25.1	52.9	17.5	3.3	1.2
Helps in decision making in difficult situations	29.6	51.0	14.2	3.0	2.2
Helps to learn best practices for service users or in operations.	26.6	52.6	16.6	16.6	1.2
Discuss and understand ethical issues in the workplace	24.7	56.1	14.3	3.6	1.3
Discuss and understand safety and security in operations	24.7	52.6	17.2	3.6	1.9
Help support physical/mental health care and eliminate work-related stress.	22.6	47.1	20.8	5.8	3.7
Discuss/provide feedback on professional development and career goals.	23	48.6	21.1	4.9	2.4
Encourage continuous training	27.7	53.8	14.3	3	1.2
Talk about management issues	23.5	56.4	15.5	3.1	1.5

Note: n=669, Missing = 32

Figure 8: Percentage of Respondents Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing That They Receive Supervisory Support on Each Issue



4.3.2 The existence, role and effectiveness of professional organizations.

Professional Organization

Professional organizations play an important role in supporting social work practitioners. The main professional organization with legal authority is the Social Work Professional Council, established under the Social Work Profession Act of 2013. Its main duty is to supervise and control the standards and ethics of licensed social workers. Licensed social work practitioners are required to be regular members of the Social Work Professional Council. However, there are other professional organizations at the association or club level that play an important role in supporting social work professionals, especially in terms of training and being a network for exchanging knowledge among practitioners.

Four major national-level social work professional organizations responded to the institutional survey: the Social Work Professions Council (SWPC), the Thailand Association of Social Workers (TASW), the Association of Thai Medical Social Workers, and the Association of Psychiatric Social Workers. Among them, the SWPC reported the highest number of members, totaling 4,588, followed by the Thailand Association of Social Workers with 2,770 members. The two health-sector professional associations reported smaller membership numbers, as seen in **Table 30**. Further, while most social work professional organization has social workers as their primary target, some of them specified their target group to social service workers (Thailand Association of Social workers), patients and their families, and the general public (Association of Thai Medical Social Workers)

Table 30: Profile of Professional Organizations

Organization	Target Group	Membership	# Member	# Staff	Office
Social Work Professionals Council (SWPC)	Social Work Practitioners and Licensed Social work Practitioners	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ordinary Member 2. Extraordinary Member 3. Associate Member Honorary Member 	4,588	6	Yes
Thailand Association of Social Workers, (TASW)	Social Work Practitioners and Licensed Social work Practitioners and networks related capacity building of social workers and social service workers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Has obtained a degree or a certificate in the field of social work; (b) Has obtained an equivalent degree or diploma, and: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Has studied or been trained in social work subjects from an educational institution or agency accredited by a relevant authority; or (2) Has had continuous work experience in the field of social work for not less than 2 years. 	2,770	1	Yes
Association of Psychiatric Social Workers	Psychiatric Social Workers	Psychiatric social workers working in agencies under the Department of Mental Health, both those currently in service and those who have retired from government service.	148	Not specified	Yes
Association of Thai Medical Social Workers	Patients and their families, the general public, licensed social workers, and professional social workers registered with the Social Work Professions Council and holding valid licenses, working within the primary, secondary, and tertiary healthcare systems under the Ministry of Public Health, including general hospitals, regional hospitals, and health service units of local administrative organizations; social workers working under the Provincial Offices of Social Development and Human Security; non-governmental organizations; social workers affiliated with local administrative organizations; and volunteer social workers.	Licensed social workers and professional social workers registered with the Social Work Professional Council and holding valid licenses are engaged in service provision within the primary, secondary, and tertiary healthcare systems under the Ministry of Public Health. These include general hospitals, regional hospitals, and health service units under local administrative organizations. They also include social workers working under the Provincial Offices of Social Development and Human Security, non-governmental organizations, social workers affiliated with local administrative organizations, and volunteer social workers.	298	25	Yes

Table 31: Active Activities of Professional Organizations

Organization/ Activities	Has Websites	Academic conference	Active in international associations	Active on Twitter	Produces newsletter	Produces an annual report	Holds at least four meetings per year	Provides professional development / short course training	Active on Facebook	Writes blogs	Produces a journal	Conducts research
Social Work Professions Council (SWPC)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Thailand Association of Social Workers (TASW)	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Association of Psychiatric Social Workers		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Association of Thai Medical Social Workers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Professional organizations play a vital role in advancing the field of social work by fostering knowledge exchange, supporting professional development, and enhancing public engagement. Information retrieved from institutional surveys indicated that professional organizations have been active in various activities. Activities that professional organizations have in common are academic conferences, producing an annual report, being active on Facebook, producing a journal, and conducting research. Three out of four organizations are active in an international association (**Table 31**)

In terms of requirements for signing the code of professional ethics, only the Social Work Professionals Council has carried out its work under the Social Work Profession Act B.E. 2556 (2013) and the Regulations on the Code of Ethics of the Social Work Profession B.E. 2562 (2019). The Association of Psychiatric Social Workers stated that there is promulgation of the Code of Ethics for Psychiatric Social Workers at the meeting and made a document to notify the social workers to practice.

From the survey of social service workers on membership in professional organizations (**Table 32**), more than half (55.4 percent) of the practitioners were not members of professional organizations. This may be because the social service workers who responded to the survey came from a variety of positions covering both professional and paraprofessional groups. And, consequently, when asked about support or assistance from the professional organizations to which they are members to assist in their work, 55.8 percent of the respondents stated that they had never received support or assistance.

The list of professional organizations listed by practitioners includes the Social Work Professionals Council, the Thailand Association of Social Workers, the Association of Psychiatric Social Workers, the Community Development Club of Thailand, the Association of Community Development Clubs of Local Administrative Organizations of Thailand, the Nursing Council, the Nurses Association, the Psychiatric and Drug Addiction Nurses Association, the Medical Social Workers Association, the Criminal Procedure Code Association, the Clinical Psychologists Association, and the Teachers Council.

Table 32: Membership of Professional Organizations

Have membership status	Number	Percentage
No	347	55.4
Yes	279	44.6
Total	626	100.0

Note: n=626, Missing=75

Table 33: Crosstabulation of SSW Group, Social Work License Holder, and Membership of Professional Organization Crosstabulation (Count)

Have Membership of Professional Org.			Social Work License Holder		Total
			No	Yes	
No	SSW Group	Professional	41	3	44
		Paraprofessional	170	6	176
		Allied Professional	81	2	83
		Others	35	1	36
	Total	327	12	339	
Yes	SSW Group	Professional	23	161	184
		Paraprofessional	24	11	35
		Volunteers	0	1	1
		Allied Professional	29	12	41
	Others	5	6	11	
Total	81	191	272		
Total	SSW Group	Professional	64	164	228
		Paraprofessional	194	17	211
		Volunteers	0	1	1
		Allied Professional	110	14	124
	Others	40	7	47	
Total	408	203	611		

Note: Others means specify the title of the executive position, n=611, Missing =90

The data in **Table 33** presents a detailed picture of the composition and professional standing of Thailand's social service workforce. It illustrates how workers are distributed across different categories (professional, paraprofessional, allied professional, volunteers, and others) and shows how these categories relate to licensure and membership in professional organizations.

The **professional group**—which includes formally trained and credentialed social workers—demonstrates the highest level of both licensure and professional organization membership. Among the 228 professionals in the dataset, **70.6% (161 out of 228)** are both licensed and members of a professional organization. While licensed social workers are required to be members of SWPC, survey results show that **3 out of 44 professionals** without organizational membership hold a license, indicating that those who are formally credentialed are also more likely to be engaged in professional networks. This pattern underscores the **strong link between professional identity, licensing, and professional engagement**. It reflects the formal standards typically expected of social workers in Thailand and the institutional pathways that support their practice.

The **paraprofessional group**—which includes workers with more limited training—makes up a significant portion of the workforce (**211 individuals in total**), but only **8% (17 people)** hold a social work license. The majority of paraprofessionals (83%) are not members of a professional organization. Similarly, among the 124 allied professionals—a group that may include related occupations such as health workers or educators—only 14 (11%) are licensed. These findings suggest that while paraprofessionals and allied professionals play an important role in service delivery, they remain largely outside the formal structures of the profession, both in terms of licensure and organizational participation. This may reflect either structural barriers to professional development or a lack of tailored pathways into professional social service roles.

The volunteer group represented in this survey is very small (only one individual); however, this respondent was both licensed and a member of a professional organization, indicating that volunteers may, in some cases, possess formal qualifications and professional commitment.

The “others” category—likely including individuals in administrative or executive roles—comprises a more diverse group of 47 respondents. While only 7 of them hold a social work license and the majority (36) are not affiliated with a professional organization, this may reflect the nature of their roles, which may not require formal licensure. Nonetheless, the relatively limited engagement with professional bodies in this group highlights an opportunity to strengthen organizational affiliation and promote inclusive professional identity across all segments of the social service workforce.

Table 34: Support received as a member of professional organizations

Cadre	Support received as a member of professional organizations		Total
	Have received	Have never received	
Professional	166 (49.99%)	239 (59.01%)	405 (100.00%)
Paraprofessional	11 (23.40%)	36 (76.60%)	47 (100.00%)
Allied Professional	41 (33.33%)	82 (66.67%)	123 (100.00%)
Volunteers	1 (100.00%)	0 (00.00%)	1 (100.00%)
Others	15 (31.25%)	33 (68.75%)	48 (100.00%)
Total	234 (37.50%)	390 (62.50%)	624 (100.00%)

Note : n= 624 , Missing= 77

Table 35: Benefits Received as a Member of a Professional Organization

Cadre	Benefits Received as a Member of a Professional Organization		Total
	Have received	Have never received	
Professional	190 (46.91%)	215 (53.09 %)	405 (100.00 %)
Paraprofessional	31 (65.96 %)	16 (34.94%)	47 (100.00 %)
Allied Profession	66 (53.23 %)	58 (46.77%)	124 (100.00 %)
Volunteers	0 (0.00 %)	1 (100.00%)	1 (100.00 %)
Others	24 (50.00 %)	24 (50.00 %)	48 (100.00 %)
Total	311 (49.76%)	314 (50.24 %)	625 (100.00 %)

Note : n=625, Missing=76

The **Table 34** presents the proportion of different social service workforce cadres who reported receiving support or assistance as members of professional organizations. Overall, only 37.5% of respondents reported having received such benefits, while 62.5% had never received them. Among professionals—the largest group surveyed—approximately half (49.99%) had received support, and just over half (59.01%) had not. Allied professionals showed a lower rate of benefit receipt (33.33%), while paraprofessionals had the lowest rate (23.40%), with over three-quarters never receiving support.

Volunteers, although representing only one individual in the sample, reported 100% having received benefits. In the “Others” category, 31.25% had received benefits while 68.75% had not, indicating that the majority in this group did not receive support. Overall, the findings reveal notable disparities in access to professional support across workforce categories. Paraprofessionals (23.40% received) and allied professionals (33.33% received) are particularly underserved compared to professionals, nearly half of whom (49.99%) reported receiving benefits.

The **Table 35** shows that overall, 49.76% of respondents reported receiving benefits as members of professional organizations, while 50.24% had not. Paraprofessionals had the highest rate of benefit receipt (65.96%), followed by allied professionals (53.23%) and those in the “Others” category (50.00%). In contrast, professionals—despite being the largest group—reported a lower rate at 46.91%. Volunteers, represented by a single respondent, reported no benefits received. These results indicate notable variation in benefit access across workforce cadres, with paraprofessionals reporting the greatest access and volunteers the least.

5

Discussion

5.1 Potential Opportunities for Social Service Workforce Planning, Development, and Support

Thailand possesses a solid foundation upon which to further strengthen the planning, development, and support of its social service workforce. The existence of robust legal frameworks—particularly the **Social Welfare Promotion Act**—presents a strategic opportunity to build inclusive and participatory welfare systems. This legislation not only enables collaboration among government, civil society, and communities but also promotes grassroots social protection and community self-reliance. These policy instruments can serve as a launching point for more targeted workforce planning efforts that align with national development priorities and the needs of diverse populations. Similarly, the **Social Work Profession Act B.E. 2556 (2013)** offers a legal basis for enhancing the credibility and ethical integrity of the profession. By requiring licensed social workers to adhere to key legislation concerning child protection, domestic violence, mental health, and family law, Thailand has the potential to position its workforce as a highly specialized and rights-based professional group responsive to complex social issues.

Workforce development systems in Thailand also offer promising pathways for strengthening the profession. The **requirement of a minimum of 800 hours of field practicum** in social work education provides a crucial platform for experiential learning and professional readiness. This creates opportunities to improve educational quality, establish national practice standards, and foster closer partnerships between academic institutions and field agencies. For practitioners, the continuing education requirement overseen by the **Social Work Professions Council**—which mandates the accumulation of 50 training credits over a five-year license period—serves as a mechanism to institutionalize lifelong learning. Furthermore, the active role of professional organizations in promoting ethics, research,

and international cooperation offers a valuable avenue for the global positioning and modernization of Thailand's social service workforce.

Opportunities for workforce support are equally significant. The existence of **ethical codes and professional service standards** provides a basis for strengthening accountability, performance evaluation, and public trust in social services. There is potential to scale up these standards through broader institutional adoption and integration into quality assurance mechanisms. In addition, the practice of providing **financial incentives** for licensed social workers in some sectors highlights a potential model for nationwide policy to recognize and retain skilled professionals. Finally, the use of **supervision and mentorship policies** in some organizations opens the door to formalizing supportive workplace cultures that nurture professional growth, manage practitioner stress, and improve service outcomes. Institutionalizing these support systems more broadly across sectors could significantly enhance workforce resilience and effectiveness in the long term.

In addition to licensed social workers and other professional social services workforce, a substantial number of **paraprofessionals**, particularly social development officers, community development officers, and community **volunteers**, serve as critical mechanisms for extending access to social services at the local level and supporting the work of professionals. These groups collectively outnumber licensed social workers, although they often possess different educational backgrounds and levels of training. There is significant potential to enhance service delivery by strategically aligning the roles and responsibilities of professionals, paraprofessionals, and volunteers according to the complexity of client needs and levels of risk. By establishing clear classifications of target populations—based on their needs, vulnerabilities, and legal entitlements—each cadre of the social service workforce can be effectively mobilized to fulfill specific functions in accordance with their qualifications, legal mandates, and scope of practice.

5.2 Policy Gaps and Strategic Imperatives for Strengthening the Social Service Workforce

The overall employment freeze policy has limited space to discuss about workforces required. In addition, national-level policies related to workforce planning for the social service workforce still require clear and comprehensive data support. This includes defining the roles and responsibilities of each category within the workforce, as well as estimating the number of workers needed to effectively meet demand—taking into account the specific needs of geographic areas or target populations. The absence of a consolidated national database on the social service workforce has made it difficult to assess the adequacy of the current workforce with clarity. Moreover, efforts to strengthen workforce development require the integration of clearly defined policies into both national and ministerial strategic plans. This is essential to ensure thorough analysis of workforce needs and to facilitate a more transparent and informed evaluation of the country's fiscal capacity in supporting such development.

This study underscores the significant influence of employment system diversity within the public sector on the job security and motivation of social service workers. Key determinants of motivation—such as salary, access to welfare benefits, and professional development opportunities—vary considerably across employment types. Within Government sector, civil servants on long-term contracts generally enjoy more favorable compensation packages and benefits than those employed under fixed-term or temporary arrangements, resulting in notable disparities in perceived job security. Furthermore, the availability of training and skills development opportunities is critical in reinforcing worker commitment and improving performance. These findings highlight the urgent need for policy interventions that promote equitable job security across employment categories, enhance welfare provisions, and expand access to continuous professional development. Such measures are vital to sustaining the motivation, retention, and long-term effectiveness of the social service workforce in the public sector.

5.3 Analysis of the Overall Workforce

Social service agencies should systematically assess workforce needs across all categories—professional or specialist staff, paraprofessionals or general service workers, and community-based volunteers. Such analysis should consider the knowledge, skills, and competencies required to address the needs of target populations effectively. According to a government agency survey, of the total 400,949 individuals engaged in social service roles, only 4,492 (1.12%) were professional workers, and 8,967 (2.24%) were paraprofessionals, while the vast majority—387,490 (96.64%)—were volunteers. This stark imbalance highlights the critical need to strengthen the professional and paraprofessional workforce to ensure quality and consistency in service delivery.

Table 36 provides an estimate of the distribution of government social service workers in Thailand, categorized into **professional**, **paraprofessional**, and **volunteer** groups. The ratios are calculated per 100,000 population, using a total population base of **65,951,210 people**.

Table 36: Current Ratio of Social Service Workforce by profession group to one hundred thousand population

Cadre	Professional		Para-professional	Volunteers
	Social Worker	Other professional social services worker	Positions	Volunteers
Number of workforce	4,587	8,570	302	387,490
Ratio to 100,000 population	6.96	12.99	0.46	587.57
	19.95		588.02	

There is an extremely low ratio of professional social workers. As per **Table 34**, there are 4,587 professional social workers nationwide, which equals approximately 6.96 per 100,000 population. This is significantly below global recommendations (e.g., UNICEF and IASSW often cite benchmarks of 20–50 per 100,000), indicating a severe shortage of licensed or formally trained social workers in the public sector. The limited number of professionals may compromise the quality, scope, and supervision of complex social services, especially for high-need or vulnerable populations.

There is an exceptionally low representation of paraprofessionals with position in the government sector, with only 302 individuals in the workforce—equivalent to 0.46 per 100,000 population. While this group helps to expand the reach of services, paraprofessionals generally have less formal training and operate with limited authority, suggesting that without strong supervision, their effectiveness in handling complex social work cases may be constrained. While volunteers are by far the largest group, with 387,490 individuals, equal to 587.57 individuals per 100,000 population. This reflects a strong tradition of community-based service and civic participation in Thailand. However, volunteers typically have minimal training and are not formally part of the professional system, which raises concerns about quality assurance, consistency, and the adequacy of support for more complex or sensitive cases.

Table 37: Distribution of Social Service Workers by Title and Affiliated Government Agency

Cadre	Responsibility	Title/Agency	MSDHS	MoH	MoJ	MoL	MoD	MoE	RTP	BMA	MHESI	MoI	Total	
Professional	Complex Secondary or higher	Social Worker	3,325	493	298	3	11	-	10	318	34	-	4,492	
		Para-Social Worker	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	70	-	-	70
		Public Health Assistant (Social Welfare Mission)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24	-	-	24
		Social Work Sergeant	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Primary or secondary	Social Development Worker	875	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	426	-	-	1,301
		Community Development Specialist	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,267	5,267
		Child Welfare Officer	73	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	73
		Labour Specialist	-	-	-	869	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	869
		Probation Officer	-	-	1,060	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,060
	Total-Professional			4,273	493	1,358	872	12	-	10	838	34	5,267	13,157
Paraprofessional	Primary	Social Development Officer	89	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	89	
		Community Development Officer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	213	213	
	Total Paraprofessional			89	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	213	302	
Volunteer	Implementation	SDHS Volunteer	387,200	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	387,200	
		BMA Volunteer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	290	-	-	290
	Total-Volunteer			387,200	-	-	-	-	-	-	290	-	387,490	
Total 3 Cadres of Workforce (Professional/Paraprofessional/Volunteer)			391,562	493	1,358	872	12	-	10	1,128	34	5,480	400,949	

Table 38: Suggested Number of Workers Per Population and Additional Number Required by Workforce Cadres

Cadres	Responsibility	Estimated percentage of total population	Number of estimated target population	No. of Current Workers	Ratio of workers per hundred thousand target population		Suggested no. of workers per estimated target population	Additional no. required
					Current	Suggested ratio (Benchmark)		
Volunteers	Promote/Prevent/Monitor	40	26,380,484	387,490	1,468.85	400	$\frac{400 \times 26,380,484}{100,000} = 105,521.94$	(-203,095.37) Surplus
Para professionals	Primary	30	19,785,363	302	1.52	300	$\frac{300 \times 19,785,363}{100,000} = 59,356.09$	59,356.09 - 302 =59,054.09
Professionals	Primary and Secondary (General services)	20	13,190,242	8,570	64.97	200	$\frac{200 \times 13,190,242}{100,000} = 26,380.48$	26,380.48 - 8,570 = 17,810.48
	Complex Secondary or higher	10	6,595,121	4,587	69.55	100	$\frac{100 \times 6,595,121}{100,000} = 6,595.12$	6,595.12 - 4,587 = 2,008.12
Total		100	65,951,210 ⁹	400,940	607.92	1,000.00	197,853.63	78,872.69

9 Source: National Statistical Office (2024) https://www.nso.go.th/nsoweb/nso/statistics_and_indicators?impt_branch=300 AND the Department of Provincial Administration (2024) <https://stat.bora.dopa.go.th/stat/statnew/statMONTH/statmonth/#/mainpage>

An analysis of the composition of the government social service workforce reveals a significant imbalance: the number of professional and paraprofessional social workers is disproportionately low compared to the vast number of community volunteers. This structural gap presents challenges in ensuring the quality and consistency of service delivery, especially given the diverse and complex needs across different levels of care and geographic regions.

To address these challenges, workforce planning should adopt a **tiered service model** that aligns roles and responsibilities with the qualifications of each worker group and the level of service complexity. This model comprises three tiers:

- 1. Professional Workers (Licensed) (10%)** - Perform complex tasks at secondary or higher levels mandated by law; conduct in-depth social assessments, risk analysis, care planning, and professional interventions.
- 2. Professional Workers (Non-licensed) (20%)** - Primary or secondary level tasks; provide basic assessments, case management, referral coordination, and general social services.
- 3. Paraprofessional Worker (30%)** - Perform tasks at primary level; support professional workers; assist with case management, referrals, and provision of general social services.
- 4. Volunteers (40%)** - Frontline and implementation-oriented tasks; prevention and monitoring of social problems; community-based support; follow-up on service delivery; coordinate with professional or paraprofessional workers when needed.

While the proposed percentage estimates serve as an initial guideline, they may be adjusted based on local service needs, demographic trends, or policy shifts. Nevertheless, this logic offers a practical framework for workforce planning. It allows decision-makers to better allocate human resources, identify training needs, and develop career pathways across all workforce levels. The model may also support the establishment of **minimum benchmarks** to guide relevant agencies in advancing the capacity and sustainability of the social service workforce as part of broader system-strengthening efforts.

Workforce data in **Table 38**, which outlines guidelines for analyzing personnel by level and scope of services, indicate only modest growth, from 607.92 to 1,000 social service workers per 100,000 population. However, this aggregate increase masks significant challenges in the geographic distribution of qualified personnel. There is a notable shortage of professional and paraprofessional workers. Urban areas tend to have a higher concentration of licensed social workers, while rural and remote regions continue to rely heavily on volunteers, often without sufficient technical support or referral systems.

To address these disparities, workforce planning must go beyond defining roles and competencies by service level and incorporate strategic deployment that prioritizes rural equity. Such an approach would enable more responsive, needs-based service delivery and serve as a benchmark for assessing workforce adequacy and quality across regions. The intensive reliance on volunteers will require a well-designed technical supervision structure for quality assurance and accountability.

Table 39 outlines the classification of the social service workforce according to educational qualifications, professional licensure, responsibilities, tasks, supervision, and example positions. This tiered system highlights distinctions between professional workers with licensure, professional workers without licensure, paraprofessional workers, and volunteers, thereby clarifying the scope of practice and supervision requirements across different workforce groups.

Table 39: Classification of Social Service Workforce by Qualification, Responsibility, and Supervision

Workforce Group	Educational Qualification	Professional Licensure	Responsibilities	Task	Supervision	Example Positions
Professional Workers	Bachelor's degree or higher (in Social Work, Social Sciences, or related fields)	Social work professional licensure granted by the Social Work Professions Council	Complex Secondary or higher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complex tasks at secondary or higher levels, especially those required by related law Perform in-depth work using social assessment and diagnostic skills covering risk assessment and care planning. Skills in providing professional intervention for individuals, families and groups in complex cases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social work practitioners work under the supervision of licensed social work practitioners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Worker Para-social worker (BMA) Public Health Assistant (Social Welfare Mission) (BMA) Social Work sergeant
		No professional licensure	Primary or secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform task at primary or secondary levels Skills in assessing problems and needs in basic social services and welfare, providing general social services, case management and referral coordination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work under the guidance of experience workers/supervisors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Development Worker Community Development Specialist Child Welfare Officer Labour Specialist Probation Officer
Paraprofessional Workers	Below bachelor's degree (High school, vocational certificate, or specific training)	No professional licensure	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform task at primary level Provide support to professional workers Skills in assessing problems and needs in basic social services and welfare, providing general social services, case management and referral coordination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work under the guidance or supervision of professional workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Development Officer Community Development Officer Para-social Worker (Assistant to Social Worker) Social Work Sergeant Public Health Assistant (Social Welfare Mission)
Volunteers	No formal qualification required	No professional licensure	Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frontline tasks Participation-oriented and implementation-focused tasks Community-based support Prevent and monitor social problems Support professional and paraprofessional workers, such as following up on service results, case management at the community level. Basic problem and needs assessment skills Coordination skills for transferring to professional or paraprofessional practitioners when required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work under the guidance or supervision of professional or paraprofessional workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Development and Human Security Volunteer Bangkok Metropolitan Administration



6

Bottlenecks and Recommendations

The findings from the present assessment reveal several critical bottlenecks that hinder the adequacy of the social service workforce in delivering quality services and effectively responding to the needs of the population, particularly those of vulnerable groups

6.1 Workforce Planning

6.1.1 Budgetary Constraints and Manpower Policies

Current government budget policies and controls on expanding the number of civil service positions, aimed at reducing long-term fiscal burdens, impact the motivation of workers to join and remain within the civil service system. The limited prospects for stability and career progression under such constraints can reduce the appeal of public sector employment. The policy of replenishing only 20% of retired civil servant positions, based on ministry-level discretion and perceived importance of the role, further narrows employment pathways, especially in essential public service functions.

In decentralized systems, local administrative organizations (LAOs) possess autonomy over personnel management. However, budget regulations stipulate that expenditure on human resources must not exceed 40% of the total annual budget. This constraint limits LAOs' ability to conduct needs-based workforce planning, particularly for professional and paraprofessional social service roles. Addressing this bottleneck offers an opportunity to align fiscal policy with actual service demands at the local level.

Recommendations

1. **Integrate Social Service Workforce Priorities into National Civil Service Planning:** Given its role as a joint secretariat in setting government workforce policy alongside the Budget Bureau and the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC), the Office of the Civil Service Commission (OCSC) should actively incorporate social service workforce needs into national manpower planning.
2. **Facilitate Inter-Ministerial Coordination to Prioritize Critical Roles:** Encourage collaboration among the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, and Ministry of Finance to identify key social service positions that warrant exemption from the 20% replenishment restriction due to their direct impact on public well-being and rights protection.
3. **Review and Adjust Budgetary Ceiling Regulations for Human Resources:** Consider revising the 40% cap on personnel expenditures within local administrative organizations (LAOs) to allow for greater flexibility in hiring essential personnel, particularly professional and paraprofessional social service workers. Adjustments could be based on population size, social vulnerability indicators, and the specific service needs of each locality.
4. **Establish Conditional Budget Allocation Mechanisms:** Introduce a system of conditional grants or special-purpose transfers from central government to LAOs specifically earmarked for the recruitment and retention of social service personnel. These mechanisms could be performance-based and tied to clearly defined workforce planning goals or service coverage outcomes.
5. **Promote Integrated Workforce Planning Tools for Local Use:** Develop and disseminate workforce planning tools and guidelines tailored for LAOs to help assess local social service needs, categorize service complexity, and align staffing levels accordingly. These tools should encourage evidence-based planning that reflects the mix of professional, paraprofessional, and volunteer roles.
6. **Institutionalize Fiscal Impact Assessments in Workforce Planning:** Require fiscal impact analyses as part of workforce planning at both national and local levels to ensure that hiring policies consider both long-term financial sustainability and the functional adequacy of social services. This can help align public finance policies with human resource development strategies more effectively.
7. **Addressing the local needs of the professional social service workforce.** Larger and more capable LAOs, particularly municipalities with sufficient fiscal and administrative capacity, should prioritize hiring social workers as full-time professional staff to lead case management, community interventions, and integrated social service coordination. For smaller LAOs facing resource limitations, establishing regional or shared social worker pools (approximately 4–5 social workers per LAO cluster) supported by a built-in supervision and technical support system is recommended. This structure would allow smaller LAOs to access professional social work services without exceeding budget constraints, while still ensuring quality, accountability, and adherence to national professional standards.

6.1.2 Lack of a Centralized Analysis of the Overall Social Service Workforce

Currently, Thailand lacks a comprehensive and centralized analysis of the social service workforce across professional, paraprofessional, and volunteer categories. This gap hinders the ability to strategically align workforce deployment with the complexity of service needs across different levels of care—ranging from basic support at the primary level to more specialized interventions at the secondary and tertiary levels. Without clear data on the number, distribution, and roles of each workforce group, it is difficult to ensure that service provision is appropriately matched to community needs.



Recommendations

1. **Revisit mechanisms under the Social Welfare Promotion Act:** There is a need to revisit the mechanisms under the **Social Welfare Promotion Act**, particularly the definition of “social worker” and the standards for training and certification. There is potential to strengthen the role of the Social Welfare Promotion Commission in leading workforce classification, standard-setting, and strategic planning to better support an integrated and tiered model of social service delivery.
2. **Develop a National Social Service Workforce Information System:** Establish a centralized, regularly updated database to capture comprehensive data on professional, paraprofessional, and volunteer social service workers, including roles, qualifications, employment status, and geographic distribution. The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS) should serve as the lead agency, given its mandate and oversight of key departments and regulatory bodies. Effective implementation will require collaboration with the Social Welfare Promotion Commission, Office of the Civil Service Commission (OCSC), Ministry of Interior (MOI), academic institutions, and professional associations to ensure data integration, standardization, and alignment with service needs across all levels.
3. **Develop Local-Level Workforce Assessment Guidelines:** Create standardized tools and criteria for local administrative organizations (LAOs) to assess workforce needs based on population size, demographic profiles, and area-specific vulnerabilities. This will support evidence-based planning and alignment with local development plans.
4. **Mandate Minimum Staffing Ratios for Key Positions:** Establish national benchmarks or minimum standards for the number of professional and paraprofessional social service workers required at each administrative level (e.g., one licensed social worker per district or sub-district), adjusted for regional context and service demand.
5. **Integrate Social Service Workforce Planning into Decentralization Frameworks:** Ensure that existing decentralization policies and task transfer frameworks explicitly include provisions for social service workforce development. This should include funding mechanisms and clear roles for LAOs in recruitment and retention.
6. **Strengthen Partnerships with Local Educational Institutions:** Collaborate with universities and training centers in the region to create practice-based training pipelines and localized internship programs that encourage graduates to serve in their home communities.
7. **The roles and responsibilities of other professional social service workers and para-professional social service workers should be clarified.** This could be done by leadership of the Social Welfare Promotion Committee, with technical support from the Social Work Professions Council.

6.2 Workforce Development

6.2.1 Lack of Qualified and Sufficient Personnel

The shortage of qualified and adequately trained social service personnel hinders the delivery of appropriate care and support, particularly for vulnerable populations. High workloads have led many agencies to reassign responsibilities to staff from unrelated positions, such as administrative personnel, resulting in mismatches between job requirements and staff qualifications. This misalignment affects service quality and places additional strain on the existing workforce.

Without dedicated personnel at the local level, many agencies rely heavily on community volunteers, including those mobilized by different ministries. These volunteers are often tasked with overlapping responsibilities

from multiple agencies, creating role ambiguity and inconsistency in support, such as compensation and logistical assistance. The study's evidence highlights that educational background and licensure are closely linked to job performance. Therefore, addressing this bottleneck requires a strategic focus on recruiting, preparing, and deploying qualified professionals to ensure effective and equitable service delivery.

Recommendations

1. **Align Job Assignments with Professional Qualifications:** Ensure that job descriptions and assigned tasks align with personnel's qualifications and training. The scope of practice and responsibilities of social service workers should be clearly defined across different levels—complex, secondary, primary, and implementation—in alignment with their educational qualifications, professional credentials, and training. Avoid assigning core social service functions to administrative staff or untrained personnel to protect service quality and professional standards.
2. **Strengthen Pre-Service and In-Service Training Pipelines:** Professional organizations shall collaborate with universities and training institutions to expand pre-service education and provide targeted in-service training for existing professionals, paraprofessionals, and volunteers. Programs should focus on community-based work, case management, and support for vulnerable populations.
3. **Formalize and Support the Role of Paraprofessionals and Volunteers:** Create a standardized framework for integrating community volunteers into the social service system, including role clarity, workload limitations, supervision mechanisms, and basic support (e.g., training, stipends, transportation).
4. **Provide Incentives for Professional Credentialing:** Encourage existing personnel to pursue formal education and licensure in social work or professional certification by offering scholarships, study leave, or professional development leave. Linking advancement opportunities to credential attainment can help strengthen long-term workforce quality.
5. **Develop a Central Registry of Social Service Personnel and Volunteers:** Establish a digital database to track professional qualifications, licensure status, work location, and areas of expertise. This will support strategic workforce deployment and help ensure services are delivered by appropriately qualified individuals.
6. **Strengthen Collaboration Between Educational Institutions and Professional Organizations to Advance Workforce Development:** Foster closer collaboration between educational institutions and social work professional organizations to enhance the quality and relevance of workforce preparation. Pre-service training should equip graduates with the knowledge, skills, and values aligned with societal needs and emerging service demands. Curricula should be adapted to reflect local contexts, such as areas with ethnic minorities, migrants, or conflict-affected regions like the southern border provinces, while expanding access to social work education in both central and regional institutions to support local workforce needs.

Professional organizations, such as **the Social Work Professions Council**, should play a central role in providing technical assistance to social service agencies, including guidance on workforce planning, position allocation for licensed practitioners, and compliance with regulatory requirements. They should also lead in delivering ongoing training and capacity development for professional, paraprofessional, and volunteer social service workers, ensuring alignment between academic preparation and real-world practice.

7. **Exploring the Feasibility of Outsourcing to NGOs and PSOs.** Further research is needed to assess the feasibility of outsourcing selected functions to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or Public Service Organizations (PSOs) as a strategy to address gaps in the social service workforce. Comprehensive information on service demand, workforce capacity, regulatory frameworks, and quality assurance mechanisms will be critical for guiding decisions on which functions may be appropriate for outsourcing, as well as the systems required to ensure effective oversight and accountability.



6.2.2 Limited Transition of Social Work Graduates into the Workforce

Despite the presence of six academic institutions offering nine social work programs at the bachelor's and master's levels, producing over 500 graduates annually, there is no clear mechanism to ensure that these graduates successfully transition into the social service workforce. While the number of social work graduates produced may appear sufficient when compared to the existing positions—given that most professional social work roles exist in the public sector—a small proportion of graduates proceed to apply for membership with the Social Work Professions Council or obtain professional licensure. This disconnect suggests potential gaps in workforce entry pathways.

Contributing factors may include limited job security, relatively low compensation, and high workloads associated with limited civil service positions, which reduce the attractiveness of public sector employment. Furthermore, in the context of decentralization and the transfer of social functions to over 7,800 local administrative organizations nationwide, the current capacity of higher education institutions to supply adequately trained graduates may fall short of local service demands. Addressing this bottleneck requires a more coordinated approach between education, licensing bodies, and workforce planning mechanisms to ensure that qualified graduates are effectively absorbed into the system.

Recommendations

- 1. Establish Graduate-to-Workforce Transition Pathways:** Develop structured mechanisms, such as graduate placement programs or paid internships in public agencies, to facilitate the smooth entry of new social work graduates into the profession, or a service-based scholarship program that requires recipients to work for the government in exchange for funding. These pathways can be supported through partnerships between universities, the Social Work Professions Council, and employing agencies at both national and local levels.
- 2. Improve Coordination Between Education and Workforce Planning:** Align social work education curricula and graduate output with national and local workforce needs through coordinated planning among the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Ministry of Interior, the Office of the Civil Service Commission (OCSC), and academic institutions. This includes forecasting demand for social work personnel at local administrative levels.
- 3. Promote Professional Licensure and Membership:** Increase incentives and support for new graduates to apply for licensure and register as members of the Social Work Professions Council. This can include subsidized licensing exam fees, exam preparation support, and recognition of licensure in hiring and promotion systems.
- 4. Expand Graduate Preparation for Local Service Roles:** Encourage academic institutions to tailor some social work training modules to reflect the realities of community-level work in decentralized settings. This includes field placements in local administrative organizations and community-based agencies to build relevant experience and increase retention in those areas.
- 5. Monitor and Track Graduate Outcomes:** Establish a graduate tracking system to monitor the career trajectories of social work graduates, including employment status, sector placement, and licensure uptake. This data will inform workforce planning, identify barriers to entry, and guide future education and policy reforms.

6.3 Workforce Support

6.3.1 Lack of clear and adequate systems and mechanisms to support each group of social services workforce

There is a lack of clear and comprehensive systems to support the diverse categories within Thailand's social service workforce—including professionals, paraprofessionals, and volunteers—each of whom operates under different qualifications, expectations, and scopes of responsibility. Survey findings consistently highlight challenges such as limited operational resources, excessive workloads, and compensation levels that do not reflect workers' qualifications or experience.

The absence of a systematic workforce analysis has hindered the ability to align staff roles, responsibilities, and service ratios with the population's needs. Workers at different service levels—from community-based prevention to complex case management—require tailored support, yet existing mechanisms remain fragmented. Access to training is uneven, with contract-based workers often unable to access funds for professional development, despite being increasingly hired by government agencies.

Recommendations

- 1. Establish a National Framework and Assessment System for Workforce Classification and Support:** Develop a comprehensive national framework that standardizes the classification, roles, and support mechanisms for all categories of the social service workforce—professionals, paraprofessionals, and volunteers. This framework should guide job descriptions, training requirements, supervision standards, and appropriate service ratios. In parallel, regular national and local-level workforce needs assessments should be institutionalized to determine staffing demands by service type and complexity. These assessments should directly inform the implementation of the framework, guide resource allocation, and support evidence-based workforce planning and policy decisions.
- 2. Expand Inclusive and Tailored Support Systems for All Workforce Categories:** Establish equitable and inclusive support systems that ensure all categories of social service workers—including professionals, paraprofessionals, contract-based staff, and volunteers—have access to appropriate training and professional development opportunities. Allocate dedicated funding that is not restricted by employment status or funding source. Support systems should be tailored to each workforce group's roles and responsibilities: for example, volunteers may require basic orientation, community-level supervision, and logistical support, while professionals may benefit from specialized clinical training, structured consultation, and ongoing skills development. This differentiated approach will help strengthen capacity, morale, and service quality across all levels of the workforce.
- 3. Establish Clear and Progressive Career Pathways for Social Service Workforce:** OSCC, MSDHS, and related ministries, with technical support from the Social Work Professional Council, should review and reform civil service regulations to enable career advancement of the social service workforce. Develop a structured, multi-tiered career progression framework of each type of social service workers that reflects the diversity of competencies within the field, from direct practice to specialist, supervisory, and leadership positions. This approach will enhance professional identity, improve retention, and strengthen the long-term capacity of the social service workforce.



- 4. Develop and disseminate clear operational manuals:** A clear operational manuals and user-friendly guidelines that explain relevant laws and regulations to ensure consistency in practice among social service workers. This should be accompanied by appropriate budget allocation, structured time management, and streamlined procedures to enhance operational efficiency and responsiveness to social issues.
- 5. Strengthen and Standardize the Supervision System for Social Service Workers:** Establish a clearer and more efficient supervision system tailored to the scope and complexity of work across different categories of social service workers. Supervisors should possess relevant qualifications and expertise to provide effective guidance, problem-solving support, and professional oversight. The system should also include the development of clear operational manuals and legal guidelines to enhance workers' confidence, accountability, and effectiveness in their roles.
- 6. Enhancing the recognition of social service workers:** It is essential for encouraging broader participation in service provision—particularly among paraprofessional volunteers—and for attracting a new generation into the field. Given the current age distribution of volunteers and limited paraprofessional, tailored and appropriate incentive structures for each volunteer group should be developed to strengthen motivation, sustain engagement, and ensure continuity within the social service workforce.

Annexes

Annex A: Specific Objectives of This Assessment

This assessment will address specific objectives/tasks as follows:

a. Provide a basic overview of the context for workforce planning, including:

- (1) Relevant policies and regulations related to the social service workforce, including statutory frameworks and structure which specify role and responsibilities of social service workforce.
- (2) Financial and other resources dedicated to hiring, employing, and training social service workers.
- (3) Define the scope – in terms of which type/s of workers and which types of functions/work will be covered.
- (4) The number of social service workers, inclusive of professional social workers, frontline social services workers, para-social workers working with Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS), Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), Ministry of Interior/ Local Administrative Organization (MOI/LAO), municipalities (Bangkok and Pattaya), Ministry of Education (MoE), NGOs, and other ministries, available per 100,000 children, according to type (governmental and non-governmental) and vacancy rates where available
- (5) Certification, registration, licensing, and renewal requirements and practices required for the governmental and non-governmental social service workforce.
- (6) Public-private arrangements regarding service provision and whether there are inadequate service provisions, such as child protection, where private provision may not be an appropriate solution.

b. Provide a basic overview of the context for workforce development and training, including:

- (1) Availability of different levels of education, training, and field placements/practice learning
- (2) Workers' perceptions of availability and accessibility of ongoing professional development opportunities

c. Provide an overview of the context for workforce support, including:

- (1) Social service workers' perceptions of challenges and opportunities, supervision, and career paths
- (2) The presence, role, size, and effectiveness of professional associations

d. Identify implications and recommendations for social service workforce strengthening to be integrated into national action plans and public finance planning.

Identify bottlenecks and gaps for which a benchmark (e.g., per capita workforce) could be set based on international comparison

Annex B: Conceptual Framework and Assessment Questions

To achieve the objectives of the social workforce assessment, the research team conducted the evaluation using the Social Service Workforce Strengthening Framework developed by the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance in 2019 as the primary assessment framework. The conceptual framework consists of three main parts: 1) Workforce planning for social service providers, 2) Workforce development for social service providers, and 3) Workforce support for social service providers, details as follows:

Workforce planning	Workforce development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using a strategic approach in planning the social service workforce • Collecting and sharing human resource data and promoting data-driven decision-making • Hiring and deployment practices and systems that take into account urban, peri-urban and rural areas and decentralization plans • Building partnerships and coalitions to foster leadership and support among a broad range of stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing education and training for social welfare practitioners in line with effective workforce planning efforts • Ensuring that the curriculum incorporates both local/ indigenous knowledge as well as international best practices to improve the well-being of vulnerable groups. • Faculty development and teaching methods • Providing a variety of in-service development opportunities for practitioners.
Workforce Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing or enhancing a system to improve and maintain the efficiency of social welfare personnel • Developing tools, resources and initiatives to improve job satisfaction and retention. • Support professional associations in their efforts to enhance professional growth and development of social welfare workers. 	

The following questions were investigated, in each aspect of the above conceptual framework, through a desk review and field data collection.

1) Social service workforce planning

1.1 Using strategic approaches in planning social service personnel

- 1) Identifying human resource requirements and budget plans to implement national laws and policies that respond to the needs of vulnerable groups.
- 2) Determining the current composition of social welfare service providers (e.g. the number and distribution of service providers).
- 3) Conduct periodic workforce assessments to identify performance gaps to meet human resource requirements.
- 4) Promoting appropriate staffing and job shifting among different groups of social workers and through appropriate decentralization of social service responsibilities.
- 5) strong and effective links with the education and training system for social workers to meet future workforce needs.
- 6) Strengthen budget mechanisms and capacity, accountability and cost planning

1.2 Collecting and sharing human resource information and promoting data-driven decision-making.

- 1) Building and Strengthening the Human Resources Information System (HRIS) – Bringing key stakeholders together to identify where good HRIS personnel data exists, discuss gaps, and share information needs and gain acceptance of HRIS requirements .
- 2) Developing and providing general definitions and functions for a variety of disciplines (e.g. Social Worker, Community Worker , Social Worker Assistant)
- 3) Setting up a system to track progress to create a feedback loop for future planning.
- 4) Determining the cost and budget for the use of useful technological resources to share the right time and the right information and data.

1.3 Improving recruitment practices and systems Hiring and city-aware deployment Outskirts of the city and rural areas and decentralization plans

- 1) Admission to various social work education/training programs (courses), diplomas and degrees.
- 2) Using a competency model to develop clear job descriptions for social service workers
- 3) Establishing fair, transparent and effective practices for recruiting, hiring and promoting social workers, assistant social workers and other social workers.
- 4) Establish or strengthen the employment system and the distribution of social workers to underserved areas, promoting the engagement of community leaders during the transition of new social workers into their work.

1.4 Building partnerships and alliances to enhance leadership and support among a wide range of stakeholders.

- 1) Supporting intra-ministerial dialogue and coordination at central and district levels to build political will, legal frameworks and resource allocation to enhance and support labour welfare.
- 2) Develop a national support agenda for social workers, identifying roles and responsibilities for governments and national and local NGO stakeholders in efforts to:
- 3) Implement the agenda, which includes campaigning to emphasize work and to increase financial commitment to social services.
- 4) Seek input from social service workers and the communities they serve to more closely link formal and informal practices and systems and to contribute to national and local campaign agendas and strategies to strengthen social service workforces.

2) Human resource development in social welfare

2.1 Organizing education and training for social welfare workers in line with efforts in effective workforce planning.

- 1) Develop a curriculum for pre-service social welfare education and in-service training programs to address gaps through workforce assessment
- 2) Using competency-based job descriptions to develop appropriate social work education curricula and training. For specific groups of social welfare workers
- 3) Establish “special channels” for social welfare education and training courses to respond to urgent and critical needs.

- 4) Ensuring that data on education programmes , gender and home region) are entered into human resource information systems.
- 5) Social welfare education and training to respond to emergencies and crises
- 6) Developing capacity in planning, budgeting and providing necessary resources for improving pre-service education and in- service training systems.

2.2 Ensure that the curriculum incorporates both local/indigenous knowledge as well as international best practices to improve the well-being of vulnerable groups.

- 1) Periodic curriculum reviews are conducted by recognised experts including local practitioners and new curricula are developed as needed.
- 2) Good practices and curricula that emphasize indigenous knowledge and cultural competence are promoted . To strengthen the capacity of social welfare practitioners to utilize good practices within their communities (e.g. community-based care) .
- 3) It allows for both a standard curriculum to enable students to achieve social work qualifications as well as electives to promote innovation and diversity.
- 4) Ensure that the curriculum recognises the skills in various areas of social welfare work (e.g. social work cases Working with families and directly with children requires a different skill set than Community mobilization and capacity building)

2.3 Development of faculty and teaching methods

- 1) Establish competency standards for social work educators and periodically evaluate performance against the standards.
- 2) Promote social work education programs to send faculty and experts for regional and international exchanges, and host international faculty to learn new perspectives and approaches , and promote the exchange of ideas and best practices.
- 3) Field training , including field supervision , requiring pre-graduate field training for social work students and promoting field experience for professional assistants.

2.4 Providing a variety of in-service development opportunities for social service workers.

- 1) Provide flexible and/or Internet- or smartphone-based courses (where possible) for community workers or caregivers who live in remote areas or are unable to leave work to attend full-time training.
- 2) Establish a national qualification certification and qualifications certification system.
- 3) Promote social welfare practitioners to access additional practical lessons and qualifications through examinations to achieve higher qualifications.
- 4) Expand access to certificate or degree programs for social welfare practitioners
- 5) Facilitate informal recognition or on-the-job learning (e.g., offering competency-based assessment).

3) Activities to support social welfare workers :

3.1 Developing or strengthening a system to improve and maintain the efficiency of social welfare personnel.

- 1) Improve mechanisms (including leadership development) to supervise and manage social welfare workers, and identify any special mechanisms that may be needed for community caregivers.
- 2) Develop a formal orientation for new staff, including an orientation program and mentoring from experienced colleagues.
- 3) Improve the efficiency measurement system of social welfare workers (e.g. assessment)
efficiency Performance measurement based on clear and realistic job descriptions with expectations and time frames, clear performance feedback, etc.)
- 4) Requesting information from family, community members and service users about service provision and service quality.
- 5) Provide reinforcement for social workers and develop quality development plans for low performing workers and put the plans into practice.
- 6) Develop SOPs for coordinated, intensive services across national and local agencies for vulnerable groups (e.g. monitoring and recording of services, referrals, ongoing support) .

3.2 Development of tools , resources and initiatives to improve job satisfaction and retention.

- 1) To solicit and apply ideas from social welfare practitioners to improve the conditions of their workplace, with the aim of enabling them to perform their responsibilities effectively.
- 2) To provide social welfare workers with the tools and resources they need to enable them to perform their duties to the best of their ability, especially in rural environments where resources are scarce (e.g. Vehicles and fuel , offices , computers , printers , photocopiers , telephones or phone cards, etc.)
- 3) Consult with social care workers and community caregivers to identify ways to recognize success or provide incentives and promotions to keep workers with the organization for longer periods of time.
- 4) Seek input from community carers about what will motivate them and implement interventions to the extent possible (e.g. explore the possibility of compensating community carers for travel and other related costs).
- 5) Develop viable career progression ladders for workers and mobilise support for these from employers, funders and other appropriate stakeholders.
- 6) Ensure that you adhere to local and international labor policies, laws, and regulations for employment conditions and workplace standards (e.g. salary, number of service users responsible, working conditions, gender discrimination, healthcare benefits and insurance plans, etc.).
- 7) Participate in ongoing monitoring of progress in job satisfaction and retention and make appropriate changes based on evidence found.

3.3 Support professional associations in their efforts to enhance professional growth and development of social welfare personnel.

- 1) Strengthen existing professional social work associations and support the establishment of new ones.
- 2) Promote networking and mutual support among social welfare professionals (e.g. List of workers , electronic job postings , job market , social media)
- 3) Support the continuous development and improvement of professional standards according to the association and
Code of Ethics for Social Workers
- 4) Support and promote compliance with professional standards and ethics for society.
Labor welfare
- 5) Issue statements of position and policy in addition to lobbying decision-makers on behalf of and in support of social welfare practitioners.

Although this assessment is not focused solely on child protection social service providers , the Child Protection System Strengthening (CPSS) framework , which serve as a good basis for assessing the progress of the social service workforce, will be adapted to assess the progress of the social service workforce system in aspect five of seven areas including:

- 1) Legal and policy framework
- 2) Management and coordination structure
- 3) Continuous service
- 4) Minimum standards and inspection mechanisms
- 5) Human resources, finance and infrastructure
- 6) Mechanisms for target population participation and community participation

Annex C: Extended Desk Review

1) Status of licensed social workers

The Social Work Profession Act of 2013 was enacted to strengthen the profession of social work. Since its implementation, there has been a steady increase in licensed social work professionals across various ministries and agencies, mainly due to heightened awareness of the legal requirements for professional practice.

To become a licensed social worker, individuals must meet the qualifications outlined in Section 10 of the Social Work Profession Act 2013. These qualifications include being at least 20 years old, holding an approved bachelor's degree in social work or a related field, completing relevant training and work experience in areas such as protection, counselling, and support for diverse populations, and meeting the standards set by the professional body. Regular members are entitled to apply for registration and licensing to become licensed social workers or obtain a certificate or diploma demonstrating their knowledge and expertise in licensed social work across various fields.

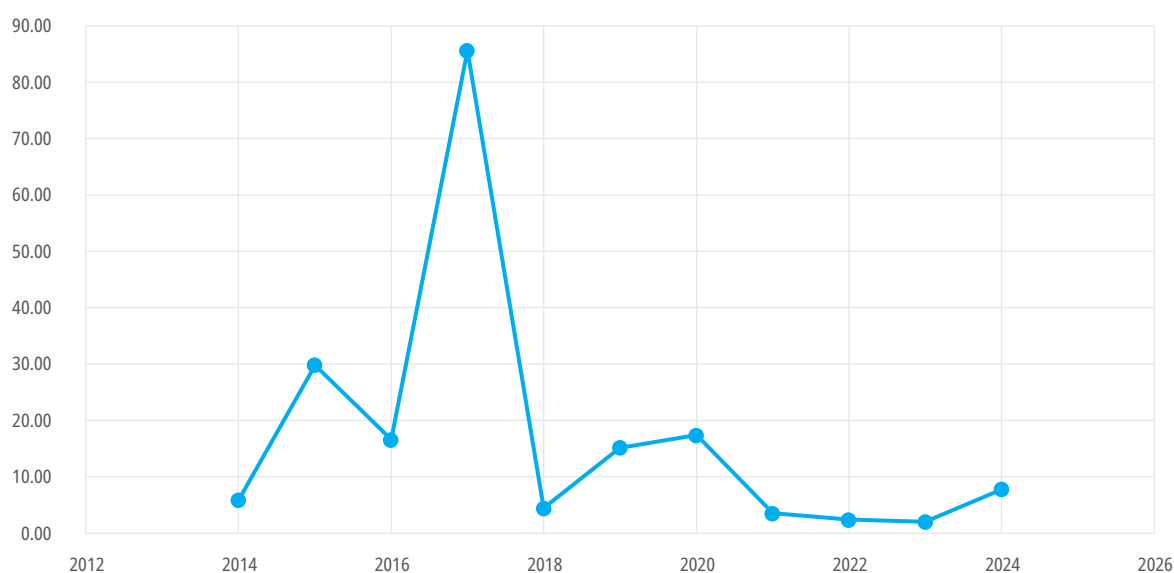
However, the enactment of this Professional Act has not significantly increased the number of licensed practitioners, as some agencies do not stipulate that social worker positions must be filled exclusively by licensed professionals. This may be attributed to the standards for job positions set by the Civil Office Service Commission (OCSC), which permit each government agency to establish the qualifications necessary for social work positions, including the requirement for holding a professional license. The qualification criteria for social work positions under the standard position system established by the OCSC, last revised on July 1, 2018, are broad and require a degree in psychology, social work, social and behavioral sciences, or political science. Furthermore, government agencies may consider other degrees relevant to the responsibilities and duties of the position as determined by the OCSC.

In some agencies, such as hospitals, universities, or the Thai Red Cross Society, there is a requirement for additional compensation for social workers who hold a social work license. However, many agencies, particularly those operating under the standard placement system established by the OCSC, do not offer any additional compensation for possessing a social work professional license.

Data displayed in **Table C1** and **Figure C1** below demonstrate the overall growth in the number of the ordinary members of the Social Work Professions Council members and licensed social workers over the past decade since the enactment of the Social Work Act in 2013. Statistics reveal that since the passage of the Social Work Act B.E. 2556, there was a significant increase in the growth rate of licensed social workers during the first four years, followed by a slight increase in the subsequent five years. Between 2016 and 2017, the number of licensed social workers rose dramatically from 1,096 to 2,035, marking an increase of nearly 86%. This surge is likely due to the conclusion of the transitional provisions specified in the Act, which allowed training and examinations for individuals without a formal social work qualification to work as social workers, enabling them to become licensed professionals

Table C1: Number of members of the Social Work Professional Council, Licensed Social Work Practitioners and Number/Rate of increase (Social Work Professional Council 2024)

Year B.E.	Number of regular members	Number of licensed social work practitioners	Increased number from previous year	Growth rate (Percent)
2013	931	684	684	
2014	1,331	724	40	5.85
2015	1,696	940	216	29.83
2016	2,171	1,096	156	16.60
2017	2,755	2,035	939	85.68
2018	3,109	2,125	90	4.42
2019	3,506	2,448	323	15.20
2020	3,848	2,874	426	17.40
2021	3,984	2,975	101	3.51
2565	4,065	3,047	72	2.42
2566	4,185	3,109	62	2.03
2567	4,566	3,351	242	7.78

Figure C1: Growth rate of licensed social workers (2013-2024)

2) International Experiences on Social Service Workforce in Various Regions

Thailand currently lacks a formal definition of the social service workforce, which makes accurately quantifying the number of social service workers across various sectors challenging. Nonetheless, international experiences offer insights into how the social service workforce is defined and the diverse roles performed by different cadres of workers within the social service system.

In this section, the review explores studies from various regions, namely the E.U., the U.S., the Middle East and North Africa, and East Asia and the Pacific, which help shape the process of defining the social service workforce and assessment of the overall social service workforce in Thailand's context.

2.1 Definition of the social service workforce

As defined by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance (GSSWA), the social service workforce comprises diverse specialists and assistant specialists focused on children, families, and communities. This workforce varies by country and emphasizes providing preventive, responsive, and supportive services grounded in social science and ethical principles. Key practitioners include social workers, youth workers, and case managers, who are responsible for addressing issues related to poverty, combating discrimination, and promoting social justice (UNICEF and Global Social Service Workforce Alliance, 2019).

As the social service workforce in the European Union expands, the nature of their work will vary based on the characteristics of the target population, government spending, and welfare models. Social workers' primary functions include assessing service users' needs, building partnerships, and managing cases.

There is a growing call for mandatory registration for the social service workforce in the United States. The essential social workforce operates under the Department of Health and Human Services. Additionally, the United States is projected to encounter a shortage of social workers by 2030. Countries in East Asia and the Pacific have varying definitions of social services, which complicates workforce planning and reflects the region's different stages of social service system development. **Table 2** provides examples of how definitions of the social service workforce differ across East Asian and Pacific countries.

Table C2: Examples of the Scope of Social Service Workers in East Asia and the Pacific (GSSWA and UNICEF EAPRO 2019)

Country	Definition of Social Service Workforce
Philippines	<p>The social service workforce in the Philippines consists of personnel from various government agencies, with the primary agency being the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). Other agencies include the Departments of Education, Labor, Health, Justice, and the Child Welfare Council. In the health sector, hospitals often employ registered social workers and paraprofessionals.</p> <p>Developing a workforce plan for social workers in the Philippines is complex due to the broad definition of “social services.” This term encompasses both immediate poverty alleviation measures, such as in-kind assistance, and interventions aimed at empowering individuals, families, and communities to tackle social challenges.</p>
Malaysia	<p>Malaysia faces similar challenges with its social service workforce as Laos. A significant portion of the workforce is dedicated to the child protection system. Relevant laws also define social workers to include various professionals who support them, such as those working in educational institutions to create safe spaces for children. The Child Protection Act (Amendment 2016) has updated the roles of these workers by establishing additional positions, such as “advisor” and “psychologist.” Malaysia does not yet have statutory provision for social workers.</p>
Thailand	<p>Previous studies have identified significant challenges within the social service workforce, particularly among social workers, assistant social workers, and volunteers. Often, roles are unclear and interchangeable, leading to confusion and inefficiency within the organization. For example, assistant social workers may be mistaken for social workers despite having different knowledge and capabilities necessary for their duties.</p> <p>In Thailand, social workers operate across various ministries, including the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Interior. The nature of their work varies significantly between central and regional offices. As of June 2017, there were 2,452 social workers, with 96% employed in central agencies and only 4% in local government agencies. The roles and responsibilities of social workers, as defined by law, are diverse. Their primary objectives are to address social problems, provide material support, and manage government services, encompassing many target groups, including children, the elderly, and individuals impacted by crises.</p>

When examining the social services workforce in Thailand, it is important to categorize social workforces by their levels and sectors. This segmentation is crucial for evaluating whether the workforce is sufficient for the general population and specific target groups. A 2017 study by Thammasat University and UNICEF Thailand focused on professional social workers (UNICEF & Thammasat University 2017).

2.2 Ratio of Social Workers to Target Group

Many countries have assessed the ratio of social service workers to population, focusing on social workers. According to a report by UNICEF and the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance, the number of social workers per 100,000 population varies from country to country, and social workers are crucial to helping vulnerable groups (GSSWA and UNICEF EAPRO 2019).

Some ASEAN countries have already started to implement social worker workforce ratios, for example, Cambodia's Strategic Plan for Strengthening the Social Workforce proposes to employ one social service provider for every 3,000 people (or 33 people per 100,000 population) by 2019. The Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU) estimates the current quota of social work practitioners to be 8,000 per 32,000,000 population (or 25 per 100,000 population) . Malaysia is currently in the process of drafting a Social Work Professions Act to recognise the social work profession through the establishment of the Malaysian Social Work Council to be responsible for the regulation of social work (ASEAN Secretariat, 2023).

While in the Philippines, information on the required workload levels for different groups of personnel employed in different areas is required for the certification of services of social service providers accredited by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) as specified in the Philippine Executive Order.¹⁰ DSWD No. N 1, 2010 as follows:

The level of users is divided into 3 groups as follows:

	User group details	Total number of people
1. Generalist :	• 60 people	60
	• 3 families × 5 members	15
	• 5 groups × members 15 people	45
	• 3 communities × 100 families × 5 members per family	1,500 (300 families)
	Total	1,620 people
2. Specialist :	• 20 people	20
	• 3 families × 5 members	15
	• 2 groups × 100 families × 5 individuals per family	1,000 (200 families)
	Total	1,035 people
3. Community Work :	• 10 groups × members 15 people	150
	• 3 communities × 100 families × 5 people per family	1500 (300 families)
	Total	1,650 people

Source: The Philippines DSWD Administrative Order N1, 2010.

¹⁰ Philippine Executive Order DSWD No. N1, 2010

For Thailand, currently there is no determination of the proportion of social work practitioners, licensed social work practitioners, or social workers to the number of service users in both government and private agencies. However, if we consider the proportion of licensed social work practitioners, which has a precise number from registration and licensing according to the Social Work Profession Act, 2013 by calculating the proportion per 100,000 population for each target group, it was found that the current estimated proportion is as follows

In Thailand, there are only 5.07 licensed social workers per 100,000 population (3,351 licensed social workers as of November 2024), revealing a stark shortage compared to the needs of the population. This is significantly lower than in countries like the United States (200 per 100,000) and even regional peers such as Cambodia and Malaysia, where ratios range from 25 to 33 per 100,000. These disparities underscore the urgent need to strengthen and expand Thailand's social work workforce in response to growing social complexities.

3) Public Financing for Strengthening the Social Service System

Assessing countries' investment in social services typically involves evaluating the proportion of social service expenditures relative to each country's economic output, as indicated by its gross domestic product (GDP). Government spending on social protection, which includes social services, varies significantly across different nations. On average, countries allocate around 12.8% of their GDP to social security (excluding health services). High-income countries spend an average of 16.4%, while low-income countries allocate only 1.1%. This disparity suggests that low-income countries often do not prioritize comprehensive investment in all aspects of social protection, including social cash transfers, care services, support services, and the workforce needed to deliver these services (UNICEF, 2022).

Various agencies are responsible for providing social services, especially for individuals with special needs or those in vulnerable situations. For instance, the Ministry of Interior oversees community development, safety, and well-being at the local level. The Ministry of Public Health promotes health and ensures access to healthcare for all groups, particularly those at risk of health issues. The Ministry of Justice protects the rights of vulnerable groups, such as crime victims, particularly those needing legal assistance or rehabilitation. At the same time, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security serves as the central agency responsible for integrating and coordinating social services. This ministry focuses on at-risk groups, including disadvantaged children, elderly individuals without care, individuals with disabilities requiring daily support, and victims of prostitution or other crimes. It collaborates with various sectors to establish a comprehensive and effective service network for those in need.

According to the National Statistical Office, which presents budget expenditures for development and regular operations from 2014 to 2023¹¹, the social work budget in Thailand has shown a continuous upward trend from 2014 to 2022. The yearly increase in the social work budget indicates the importance of investing in social services to improve the quality of life for the country's citizens. However, in the fiscal year 2023, the budget experienced a decrease of nearly 20% compared to the previous year. The budget allocation for social work was 456.675 billion baht in 2021, 366.201 billion baht in 2022, and 383.756 billion baht in 2023, reflecting a significant shift in budget allocation. The projected allocation for social work in 2025 is expected to represent approximately 2.14% of GDP (17.9 trillion baht), indicating that despite the budget reduction, the government is still focused on improving the quality of life for vulnerable populations.

¹¹ Expenditure budget for development and routine operations, classified by type of work, fiscal years 2014–2023 from National Statistic Office https://www.nso.go.th/nsoweb/nso/statistics_and_indicators?impt_branch=580

Annex D: Approach and Methods

1) Approaches

To consider the potential of the social service workforce and identify strengths and gaps that require further efforts, several approaches were undertaken to achieve the overall and specific objectives of this analysis.

Establishment of Task Group: The Working Group comprised of representatives from key stakeholders, including 1) government agencies, 2) the non-profit private sector, 3) educational institutions providing social work, and 4) professional organizations. The primary functions of the Working Group are 1) to consider the context and co-define the social service workforce, including professional and paraprofessional practitioners, 2) to facilitate access to data and collection from their organizations, 3) to review preliminary findings, and 4) to contribute to the identification of key issues and recommendations for strengthening the social service workforce.

Multiple Data Collection Methods: To achieve the main objectives of this analysis, various methods were employed, including 1) document review, 2) in-depth interviews/focus group discussions, 3) administrative survey, and 4) online survey, to ensure a complete understanding of key aspects and the validity and reliability of the data obtained from all stakeholders. The following sections describe how each additional data collection method was carried out.

Keyword definition: In Thailand, a standard definition of the social service workforce is needed, despite the wide variety of frontline workers serving vulnerable populations. To develop an assessment of the social service workforce, it is essential to establish a clear and accepted definition. For the key words that will be initially defined, they are as follows:

- 1) Social Services
- 2) Social Service Workforce
- 3) Professional Workers
- 4) Paraprofessional Workers /or Assistant Professional Workers
- 5) Allied Professionals

Based on the guidelines of the Social Service Mobilization Toolkit developed by the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance (2019), the following process was conducted to determine keywords:

- 1) Study the international definitions of social worker personnel, as well as other relevant definitions.
- 2) Discuss the official definition of “social work” in the law and the differences between the definitions of social worker and social work.
- 3) Discuss other labors that fall under the definition of social service workforce in Thailand.
- 4) Discuss relevant legislation or policies, including definitions or references to the social service workforce.
- 5) Task Group members are encouraged to provide feedback and information on all potential roles and positions of the social worker workforce in the country. They should be encouraged to answer the following questions:
 - What is the nature of the agency that employs them (government or private)? Which ministry oversees the government agency?
 - Do their job titles correspond to the classification of positions set by the Civil Service Commission?
 - Are they paid for their work or are they unpaid volunteers?
 - Are professional licenses a requirement for their role?

- Who is the target population for social services ? Are services tailored to specific vulnerable groups or the general population ?
 - What are the specific duties and responsibilities that these staff perform in practice, such as promotion, problem prevention, monitoring, intervention, follow-up, etc. ?
- 6) Discuss and define who is a “Allied professional”
 - 7) Prepare a flowchart to begin recording different levels, employers, and labor roles, which will help identify key institutions and labor to survey and refine definitions.
 - 8) Prepare a draft definition to be submitted for review and revision to create a final version.
 - 9) The debate over who to include and who to exclude can be contentious.

This definition can be considered as an “operational definition ” that cannot be concluded permanently, but will be a definition for this study and can be checked and reviewed periodically, especially when there is progress in the future according to some measures in the strategic framework or action plan.

2) Methods of study

a. Document review

- A desk review was conducted, covering national policies and regulations, reports, plans and case studies on the social service workforce, including legal and structural frameworks. Professional regulations and documents on licensing/certification processes, codes of conduct and standards were included to understand the availability of standard frameworks for the social service workforce, particularly for social workers. The availability of education, training and field training/learning from practice was also examined, as well as the existence, role, size and effectiveness of professional organisations . An examination was made of whether social service workforce development activities were integrated into any national plans and how they could be mobilised.
- The review covers international experiences related to the definition and scope of practice of the social service workforce, the development and strengthening of the social service workforce, public financial planning and related action plans, performance criteria for social services and child protection, and relevant case studies. The main objective of the review is to provide a comprehensive and scholarly analysis of the development of the social service workforce, with a focus on public financial planning, and to make recommendations for future progress in this area.

b. Task group meetings

The Task Group , comprised of representatives from the Human Resources departments of the agencies or key stakeholders from each agency, met at various stages of the assessment process. In the initiation/preparation phase, the Task Group reviewed and contextualized the definition of social service workers, established an agreed-upon operational definition of social service workers, identified workers who should be included in the social service workforce, and targeted agencies for data collection. In the data collection phase, the Task Group facilitated data access and oversaw the data collection process. In the data analysis phase, the Task Group reviewed and validated preliminary findings and provided additional recommendations for data analysis. Finally, the Task Group reviewed the final report and identified key recommendations for strengthening the social service workforce.

Selection Criteria :

- (1) Government and private agencies are selected from among agencies providing social services to vulnerable populations and employ social workers such as social workers, social development officers, community development officers and other related positions, including paid and unpaid professionals, as well as paraprofessional workers who work in preventive, responsive and promotional roles to support

vulnerable groups, families and communities. Administrative or human resource personnel from social service agencies are expected to be nominated from each organization for this, which was notified to each organization. The Office of Civil Service Commission Office representative was included to provide information on human resource management in government agencies. A representative from the National Social Welfare Promotion Office, which oversees social workers under the Social Welfare Promotion Act B.E. 2546, was also included.

- (2) Private agencies are selected from public interest organizations registered under the Social Welfare Promotion Act of 2003, as organizations that provide services aimed at preparing, preventing, responding to, and promoting to support vulnerable groups, families, and communities.
- (3) The School of Social Work was selected from 6 institutions that offered the Social Work program .
- (4) Professional organizations, such as the Thai Association of Social Workers and the Social Work Professional Council, which are involved in the supervision of licensing and professional development of social workers, including paraprofessional workers. Invited to join the working group

c. In-depth interviews / focus groups

In-depth interviews or focus groups were conducted with two groups: 1) experts; and 2) social service providers, with in-depth interviews with 1-3 experts. A person with at least 10 years of experience in social services, social welfare services and labor management, with the aim of defining the scope of the social worker workforce. The workshop identified the types of workers and the roles and responsibilities they would cover. In addition, experts provided insights into work planning, development and support, as well as an analysis of current obstacles in preparing the social service workforce to meet societal needs. Representatives from the Budget Bureau, Office of the Civil Service Commission, also participated in the workshop to provide a broader perspective on national policy, public budget and human resource management in the government system.

d. Survey

(1) Administrative Survey

The institutional questionnaire was designed to collect data from 1) employers of social work professionals (government and private organizations) , 2) social work education institutions , and 3) professional organizations. The employers of social welfare workers , which are government agencies, select specific types from agencies that have been recommended by the working group and within the scope of the specified social service personnel. By sending a letter requesting cooperation in answering the survey to the designated agency. For private sector agencies, random selection is made from a list of public benefit organizations registered under the Social Welfare Promotion Act of 2003. For social work education institutions and social work professional organizations, data collection is conducted from all existing organizations.

(2) Online survey:

key roles and responsibilities of social service providers and collect information on supervision , access to continuing professional development , and professional opportunities and advancement, a survey of social service practitioners was conducted online, which was communicated through electronic channels and direct contact with relevant organisations.

The online survey was conducted via the Enablingsurvey.com website . Data were analyzed by screening based on the following inclusion criteria: 1) Acknowledged information and consented to participate in the study 2) answered no less than 50% of the questions 3) answered important screening questions (Screeners) that had to be answered including job position, affiliation, scope of work related to some kind of social work and 4) still working in social service field when answering the survey. The online survey was publicized through the Facebook Page of the Thai Social Workers Association and disseminated to various agencies through official letters and social media of relevant agencies.

2) Data collection tools

The questionnaire was designed based on the Social Service Workforce Mapping Tool developed by the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance (2019), with modifications for the Thai context. The Social Service Workforce Empowerment Framework developed by the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance in 2019 provided a framework for developing questions for in-depth interviews or focus group discussions with social service experts and practitioners.

There are 7 data collection tools in total. Sets with different target groups:

- 1) Questionnaire for the survey on the management of employers of social service workers in government agencies (GOs)
- 2) Questionnaire for the survey on management of employers of social service workers in private organizations (NGOs)
- 3) Questionnaire for the survey on administration with educational institutions that offer social work programs.
- 4) Questionnaire for the survey on management with professional organizations
- 5) Questionnaire (online survey) for social service workers
- 6) Guideline questions for Focus Group Discussion (FGD) or In-Depth Interview (IDI) with experts.
- 7) Guideline questions for Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with social service practitioners.

Each instrument was reviewed by three experts to ensure the validity of the items and to provide feedback on the clarity and correctness of the questions before being used for data collection.

3) Data cleaning and data analysis

Once data from the target population is received, the researcher performs data cleaning to check for accuracy and correct errors, inconsistencies, and missing data in the returned dataset to improve the quality and accuracy for analysis and decision-making. This process includes dealing with duplicate data, filling in missing values, normalizing, and removing irrelevant data to ensure that the data is reliable and ready for analysis.

Data from different data collections were analyzed by combining qualitative and quantitative data to address the main questions of this assessment, which would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the situation of the social worker workforce in Thailand, leading to deeper findings, better validation of results and a more comprehensive interpretation of the study results.

Data from in-depth interviews/focus groups were tape-recorded, transcribed, and processed by grouping the content and summarizing the main points according to the study questions.

Data from the survey were analyzed using basic descriptive statistics, including counting, percentage calculations, and inferential statistics to find the relationship of some variables to obtain clearer statistical conclusions, using Excel and SPSS.

In addition, using multiple data sources and multiple methods to verify the accuracy of the data enhanced the reliability by organizing data from different sources, which helped to understand and interpret the situation of social workers in Thailand more completely.

4) Limitations of the study

Although the design and evaluation were carefully planned, the study encountered the following limitations:

Lower than expected response rates for some target groups: The sample size for the survey of private social service agencies (non-profit private organizations) has limitations in terms of sampling scope and response

rate. This is because there are many of them in Thailand and there is no database that lists all agencies. Therefore, the researcher used a random sampling frame to select the sample group from public benefit organizations registered with the Office of Social Welfare Promotion (OSW), Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. Therefore, it may not be representative of all private non-profit organizations in Thailand. In addition, since the database is a database when it is registered, the address information of the agencies may not be current and there is no email address that can be contacted. This limitation results in the data obtained may not be truly representative of the entire population.

Accuracy of the number of social worker data: In collecting data from agencies about the number of social worker from government agencies, it was found that there was a lack of clarity as to whether the data received was the staffing framework that the agencies had or the actual number of workers at the time of data collection.

5) Ethical standards

This assessment and the research team complied with ethical standards and procedures, in particular the “Guidelines for Ethical Standards in Research, Assessment, Data Collection and Analysis of Human Subjects.” UNICEF” While this assessment is not aimed at vulnerable populations, all participants were be provided with information about the assessment. Such information covered the purpose of the research, the procedures involved, potential risks, benefits and participants’ rights. Participants must agree to participate voluntarily after fully understanding this information, and their consent was recorded through a signed or action consent. In particular, social service workers participating in the online survey must maintain confidentiality, with measures in place to protect their personal information during data analysis.

To protect your information, the following steps were be taken:

- Documentation : Prior to any data collection, explicit consent must be obtained from participants, explaining the purpose of the study, how the data will be used, and their rights.
- Anonymization: Personally identifiable information must be removed. To prevent the data from being linked back to individual participants.
- Data Access Control: Access to sensitive data is restricted to authorized personnel who need it for assessment, using secure login and authorization credentials, and using encryption methods to protect data during storage and transmission to ensure that data is secure and unintelligible to unauthorized persons.
- Secure Data Storage: Data must be stored in a secure location, such as an encrypted database or password-protected system, to prevent unauthorized access.
- Data Retention: Data will be retained for a period of two years after the end of the research study.
- Sharing : Establish practices for sharing data with colleagues or other researchers, ensuring that data sharing agreements preserve the confidentiality and integrity of the data .

6) Quality Assurance

- 1) Academic experts and practitioners with expertise in social work or social welfare services review all data collection instruments, and a Task Group comprising key stakeholders reviews the preliminary studies and contributes to providing key recommendations to strengthen the social service workforce.
- 2) The findings were presented to key stakeholders, including social service agencies , professional organizations, educational institutions, social work and social welfare experts, the Budget Bureau, the Office of Civil Service Commission, the Office of Public Sector Development Commission, and the Office of National Economic and Social Development Board, in collaboration with UNICEF. The Thai Social Workers Association organized a policy-driven presentation meeting to share preliminary findings and provide perspectives on appropriate and feasible recommendations for Thailand

Annex E: Agencies with Representatives Participating in the Task Group

Type	Agencies
GOs	Ministry of Social Development and Human Security
	Ministry of Public Health
	Ministry of Justice
	Ministry of Education
	Ministry of Interior
	Ministry of Defence
	Ministry of Labor
	Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation
	Bangkok Metropolitan Administration
	Office of Civil Civic Commission
NGOs	The Center for the Protection of Children' Rights (CPCR)
	Duang Prateep Foundation
	Save the Children Thailand
Schools of Social Work	Thai Association of Social Work and Social Welfare Education
	Thammasat University
Professional Organizations	Social Work Professionals Council
	Association of Medical Social Workers
	Association of Psychiatric Social Workers

Annex F: List of Experts interviewed

#	Expert	Area of Expertise
1	Prof. Dr. Kittipat Nontapatamadul (Professor at Thammasat University)	Social work and social policy
2	Mr. Chinchai Cheecharoen (Committee member of the Social Work Professions Council and former advisor to the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security)	Social policy and development
3	Mr. Sanphasit Khumpapham (Expert on child protection and former CRC committee)	Child Protection
4	Ms. Anyamanie Buranakanond (Former president of Social Work Profession Council of Thailand and Thailand Association of Social Workers)	Social Work
5	Ms. Aranya Pornchaiya (Acting Director of Bangkok Metropolitan Administration Civil Service Commission)	Human resource management
6	Mr. Ponlawat Karunpasakorn (Director of Community Development Promotion, Ministry of Interior)	Community development promotion
7	Mrs. Boonploy Tulapan (Health Administration Division, Ministry of Public Health)	One Stop Crisis Centers (OSCC)
8	Mrs. Sirathip Phasrisombat (Office of Technical Promotion, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security)	Social welfare services at provincial level
9	Ms. Chatnatee Silakul (Ministry of Justice)	Human resource and development
10	Rep. from Bureau of Budget	Public financing
11	Rep. from Office of Civil Service Commission	Human resource management of civil servants in ministries and departments
12	Rep. from National Economic and Social Development Committee	National policy

Annex G: Summary of the Number of Agencies and Individuals Participating in Each Data Collection Method

Data collection method	Number of agencies/ persons participating in providing information	Remarks
1. Task Group Meetings		
1 st Meeting	29 individuals	Specific invitation
2 nd Meeting	34 individuals	Specific invitation
2. In-depth interviews/focus groups		
In-depth interviews with experts	12 individuals	Specific invitation
Discussion group of social service workers	15 individuals	Specific invitation
3. Survey		
Survey of GOs	7 Ministries, National Police Office, Bangkok Metropolitan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information from the Ministry of Interior (only the number of Social Service workers) comes from a literature review) Subordinate agencies under the Ministry may not provide complete information of all agencies.
Survey of NGOs (public service organizations)	80 Public Service Organizations, Thai Red Cross Society	The response rate of public organizations was 16.56 percent of the questionnaires sent out to 483 public benefit organizations
Survey of professional organizations	4 organizations	No response from the Thailand Association of Social Welfare and Social Work Education (TASWE)
Survey of educational institutions	6 universities (10 faculties)	Response was 85.71 % of institutions that offer social work programs
Survey of practitioners	701 individuals	Expected number was 400 people

Annex H: Government Agencies Participating in the Administrative Survey

#	Ministry level agencies	Subordinate agencies under the jurisdiction
1	Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Office of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry 2) Office of the Secretary of the Department of Social Development and Welfare, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security 3) Department of the Promotion and Development of the Quality of Life of Persons with Disabilities 4) Department of Women's Affairs and Family Institute 5) Department of Older Persons Affairs 6) Department of Children and Youth Affairs
2	Ministry of Public Health (MOPH)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Office of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry 2) Department of Health 3) Department of Medical Services 4) Department of Mental Health
3	Ministry of Justice (MOJ)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Department of Probation 2) Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection 3) Department of Correction
4	Ministry of Labor (MoL)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Social Security Office 2) Department of Skill Development
5	Ministry of Defence (MoD)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Office of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry 2) War Veterans Organization 3) Royal Thai Army Medical Department 4) Phramongkutklao Hospital 5) Surasakmontri Camp Hospital 6) Phichit Dab Hak Camp Hospital 7) Prajaksilpakom Camp Hospital 8) Pha Muang Camp Hospital
6	Ministry of Education (MoE)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Office of the Secretary of the Education Council 2) Office of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry 3) Office of the Private Education Commission
7	Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ramathibodi Hospital 2) Faculty of Medicine, Thammasat University 3) Faculty of Medicine, Khon Kaen University 4) Faculty of Medicine, Chiang Mai University
8	Royal Thai Police (RTP)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Police Hospital
9	Bangkok (BKK)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Social Development Office 2) Medical Department 3) Department of Health 4) Office of Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment 5) Public Health Service Center 6) Public Health Service Center " New Step Plus Clinic" 7) Public Health Service Center " Mental Health Clinic"
Total of 9 Agencies		Public financing

Note : There is no response from the Ministry of Interior. The number of general civil servants is obtained from a desk review (data from the Office of the Civil Service Commission).

Annex I: Basic Information of Social Service Workers Responded to the Survey

Social service workers who took the online 701 social service workers who responded to the online survey and met the selection criteria, with the largest number being female at 77.2 percent. The average age was 40.96 years, the average work experience was 10.6 years, and the average experience in social service was 10.97 years.

Social service workers had various educational qualifications, from below bachelor's to doctoral degrees. At 48 percent, the largest number had a degree in social sciences, followed by a degree in social work at 33.5 percent, a degree in science at 17 percent, and a degree below bachelor's degree (in which the field was not specified) at 0.6 percent.

Regarding the information regarding the status of being a social worker, the respondents were licensed social workers (30.4 %). Not being a licensed social worker, 67.3 percent, and those who indicated other, accounting for 2.3 percent, include those registering as a licensed social worker or renewing their social work license.

When asked about the scope of their social work, the sample group indicated that they performed social work as their primary role, at 67.3 percent, followed by performing social work as a secondary role at 30.4 percent. However, some (19.4 percent) indicated they performed social work as other assigned tasks. At 2.0 percent, perform social work to replace work in different positions, reflecting the distribution of roles in social service of the sample group. It can be analyzed that the fact that a large number of the sample group has a primary role in social work indicates the importance of this work in the agencies to which they belong and indicates that social work is the main mission of the personnel.

The fact that the sample group performed social work in a secondary role may reflect that these individuals may have other primary duties that need to be performed concurrently, which results in the division of time and resources between primary and secondary roles. In addition, the performance of additional tasks may indicate the organization's flexibility that allows individuals to multitask, or it may indicate a shortage of specialized social work personnel.

For the case that stated that social work is performed to replace other positions, it may reflect the need to fill the gaps caused by personnel shortages or the allocation of personnel that does not meet the requirements of the positions, which may indicate problems in the organization's human resource management structure. All of this information suggests the dynamics of social work performance that have both challenges and opportunities for improvement, which should focus on personnel management to increase efficiency and positive impacts from social work in Thailand's public and private sectors.

Summary of Basic Information of Social Service Workers Responded to the Survey

Basic information	Amount (percent)
1. Gender (n=701, Missing 0)	
Female	541 (77.2)
Male	141 (20.1)
LGBTQ+	14 (2.0)
Not specified	5 (0.7)
2. Age (average 40.96 years, minimum 20 years , maximum 69 years)	
3. Working experience in current position (average 10.60 years, minimum less than 1 year , maximum 36 years)	
Social work experience (average 10.97 years, minimum less than 1 year, maximum 42 years)	
Educational qualifications (field of study) (n=624, Missing 77)	
Any degree in Social Work	209 (33.5)
Bachelor of Social Sciences	305 (48.9)
Bachelor of Science	106 (17.0)
Below Bachelor's Degree	4 (0.6)
4. Situation as a licensed social worker (n=701, Missing 0)	
Is a licensed social worker	472 (67.3)
Not a licensed social worker	213 (30.4)
Others (e.g. in process of registration, license renewal)	16 (2.3)
5. Scope of social work practice (n=701, Missing 0)	
Practice as the primary work	472 (67.3)
Perform as secondary work	213 (30.4)
Perform other assigned tasks	136 (19.4)
Perform work that replaces work from other positions	14 (2.0)
other	10 (1.4)

Annex J: Data Collection Tools

J.1 Institutional Survey-Government

Section 1: Institutional Information

1.1 Name of Institution/
Organization:

Name of Government Institution

1.2 Location:

Town/City

Province/State

1.3 Contact person:

First Name

Last Name

1.4 Title:

Work title/ name of position

1.5 Email:

Contact person email address

Section 2: Workforce Data

2.1 Please complete the table below, providing the number of social service workforce staff by ministry, department, title and location. Please attach any available job descriptions for the titles listed below.

The definition of "Social Service Workforce" is

Ministry	Department	SSW Position Title	Primary Functions of that Title	any conditions regarding professional licenses (yes/no/sometime)	Number of Staff with that title by location		
					# at national / central level	# at Provincial/ State/ Regional level	# at local/ community/ town level

2.2 Are national policies or legislation describing the role or functions of any of the titles listed above? Yes | No

If yes, please provide the name or title of the policy or legislation.

2.3 Please check if any of these issues currently affect the number of workers as listed above in the table:

Hiring freeze | High vacancy rates | Budget issues | “Brain drain” or emigration

If you have other issues, please provide more detail.....

2.4 The agency has strategic plans for human resources services and budget plans to ensure that there will be enough social worker personnel to meet legal expectations, or the number of service users, or to strengthen those. Yes | No

If yes, please provide the name of the plan or more details.....

2.5 Is there a determination of the current composition of the social service workforce (e.g., numbers and distributions)? Yes | No

If yes, please provide more details.....

2.6 Are the factors on cultural context (i.e., factors that have promotive or prohibitive effects on the overall family’s enabling environment), demographic, social, and economic development, or use of technology being included as determinants? Yes | No

If yes, please provide more details.....

2.7 Are there human resource management information systems? Yes | No

If yes, please provide more details.....

2.8 Are there guidelines for creating a human resource development system in the agency, both quantitative and qualitative? Yes | No

If yes, please provide more details.....

2.9 For each ministry department listed above, please describe the department’s social welfare service mandate:

Ministry	Department	Description of department’s social welfare service mandate	Name of policy or legislation where this is described if available	National policies or laws that describe the role or duties of any position title (if any)

Section 3: Challenges

3.1 What are the three biggest challenges your country faces in strengthening the social service workforce? Please check the top three:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> low salaries | <input type="checkbox"/> lack of training and professional knowledge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> high workload | <input type="checkbox"/> poor supervision and support system |
| <input type="checkbox"/> low motivation | <input type="checkbox"/> limited resources to work with |
| <input type="checkbox"/> low authority | <input type="checkbox"/> ineffective interagency collaboration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lack of clarity in roles/performance expectations | <input type="checkbox"/> poor work conditions/facilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lack of career advancement opportunities | <input type="checkbox"/> weak information management, records, data management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other _____ | |

3.2 Does your organization use contract services or volunteers to supplement or replace professionals in their work?

- Yes | No

If yes, what is your opinion on the efficiency of these two groups of workers?

And what suggestions do you have for developing these groups?

Section 4: Opportunities

4.1 Are there compelling current initiatives underway related to planning, developing or supporting the workforce in your country that you think should be highlighted? These examples will be considered when developing a future national workforce strengthening plan, to ensure future initiatives build on existing practice. Please use the Framework for Strengthening the Social Service Workforce found here as a guide in order to help highlight innovative and effective approaches to strengthening the workforce. Please provide a brief description and/or send a relevant report with your response to this survey.

Primary category of the initiative	Organization/ Project Name	Description of the initiative
Planning		
Developing		
Supporting		

4.2 What are some of the country's most important milestones and achievements in the last 5 years related to strengthening the government social service workforce? (If there are multiple important milestones, feel free to prioritize them).

J.2 Institutional Survey-Private Organization

Section 1: Institutional Information

1.1 Name of Institution/
Organization:

Name of NGO / NGO Network / Civil Society Group

1.2 Location:

Town/City

Province/State

1.3 Contact person:

First Name

Last Name

1.4 Title:

Work title/ name of position

1.5 Email:

Contact person email address

Section 2: Workforce Data

2.1 Please complete the table below, providing the number of social service workforce staff by organization, project, title, and location. Please attach any available job descriptions for the titles listed below.

The definition of "Social Service Workforce" is

Organization / Civil Society Group Name	Program/ Project/ Department Name	SSW Position Title	Primary Functions of that Title	any conditions regarding professional licenses (yes/no/sometime)	Number of Staff with that title by location		
					# at national / central level	# at Provincial/ State/ Regional level	# at local/ town/ community level

2.2 Are there national non-governmental, non-profit networks of organizations that share information about their social service employees? Yes | No

If yes, please describe

2.3 Please check if any of these issues currently affect the numbers of workers as listed above in the table:

Hiring freeze | High vacancy rates | Budget issues | "Brain drain" or emigration

If you have other issues, please provide more details.....

2.4 The agency has strategic plans for human resources services and budget plans to ensure that there will be enough social worker personnel to meet legal expectations, or the number of service users, or to strengthen those. Yes | No

If yes, please provide the name of The plan or more details.....

2.5 Is there a determination of the current composition of the social service workforce (e.g., numbers and distributions)? Yes | No

If yes, please provide more details.....

2.6 Are the factors on cultural context (i.e., factors that have promotive or prohibitive effects on the overall family's enabling environment), demographic, social, and economic development, or use of technology being included as determinants? Yes | No

If yes, please provide more details.....

2.7 Are there human resource management information systems? Yes | No

If yes, please provide more details.....

2.8 Are there guidelines for creating a human resource development system in the agency, both quantitative and qualitative? Yes | No

If yes, please provide more details.....

Section 3: Challenges

3.1 What are the three biggest challenges your country faces in strengthening the social service workforce? Please check the **top three**:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> low salaries
<input type="checkbox"/> high workload
<input type="checkbox"/> low motivation
<input type="checkbox"/> low authority
<input type="checkbox"/> lack of clarity in roles/performance expectations
<input type="checkbox"/> lack of career advancement opportunities
<input type="checkbox"/> lack of career advancement opportunities management
<input type="checkbox"/> other _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> lack of training and professional knowledge
<input type="checkbox"/> poor supervision and support system
<input type="checkbox"/> limited resources to work with
<input type="checkbox"/> ineffective interagency collaboration
<input type="checkbox"/> poor work conditions/facilities
<input type="checkbox"/> weak information management, records, and data |
|---|--|

3.2 Does your organization use contract services or volunteers to supplement or replace professionals?

- Yes | No

If yes, what is your opinion on the efficiency of these two groups of workers?.....

And what suggestions do you have for developing these groups?

Please provide information on how contract or volunteer services supplement or replace paraprofessionals.

Section 4: Opportunities

4.1 Are there compelling current opportunities or initiatives underway related to planning, developing or supporting the workforce in your country that you think should be highlighted? These examples will be considered when developing a future national workforce strengthening plan, to ensure future initiatives build on existing practice. Please use the Framework for Strengthening the Social Service Workforce found here as a guide in order to help highlight innovative and effective approaches to strengthening the workforce. Please provide a brief description and/or send a relevant report with your response to this survey.

Primary category of the initiative	Organization/ Project Name	Description of the initiative
Planning		
Developing		
Supporting		

4.2 What are some of the country's most important milestones and achievements in the last 5 years related to strengthening the non-government social service workforce? (If there are multiple important milestones, feel free to prioritize them)

J.3 Institutional Survey-Faculty of Social Work

Section 1: Institutional Information

1.1 Name of Institution/
Organization:

Name of Education Institution

1.2 Location:

Town/City

Province/State

1.3 Contact person:

First Name

Last Name

1.4 Title:

Work title/ name of position

1.5 Email:

Contact person email address

Section 2: Education and Training Data

Degree Programs

2.1 Please fill out the chart below, providing information on the type of degree from fields relevant to the social service workforce (such as). Please submit any links or documents listing academic programs relevant to the social service workforce.

The definition of "Social Service Workforce" is

Name of university or educational institution	Name of the degree (social work, counselling etc)	Level of Degree (insert relevant to the country, for example, Bachelors, Masters, PhD)	Length of study (in months)	Requires a field placement (yes/ no / not sure)	Length of field placement	Year of the last graduating class	Number of graduates in the last graduating class	Year the program was established

2.2 Who approves, accredits or authorizes these degree programs? If different entities for different types of degrees, please explain.

2.3 Is there a national system in place to review the content of the curriculum against nationally established standards? Yes | No

If yes, please describe, including frequency of audits of curricula content

2.4 Are social work degree programs required to align with international social work education standards, such as those by the International Association of Schools of Social Work? Yes | No

If yes, please describe, including the type of requirement and frequency of audits of curricula content

2.5 Is it challenging for degree programs to recruit qualified lecturers? Yes | No

Please describe.....

2.6 Has the institution prepared a plan and set a budget for developing educators/instructors in the field of social work (such as a teacher development plan by providing scholarships for higher education, funding for short-term exchange training, etc.)?

Yes | No

Please provide more information

2.7 Do curricula include research conducted in and relevant to your country, or are course materials drawn from content outside of your country?

- Primarily national content Some national content
- Little national content Only external content

Are there any mechanisms to adjust the curriculum to ensure its timely response to new social situations or new developments in the country? What criteria will be used?

Short courses that are certified

2.8 Please list the types of accredited short-course training programs that issue recognized certificates or diplomas relevant to the country’s social service workforce. Short course training programs are shorter than degree programs (typically 3 months to 2 years) and can be in place of a longer degree program or offered as post-graduate courses. The courses listed need to be accredited by a nationally recognized body. Universities, vocational schools, or other recognized, accredited training providers typically offer them. Please note that we are not looking for information on, for example, a training offered by an NGO to its staff when that training is not formally recognized or certified. Please provide the name of the short course, the name of the school or vocational training program offering the certificate, the length of study, and the average number of graduates per year.

Name of the training course	Short description of course	Length of the training	Target audience	Training provider(s)	Certified by whom?	Number of graduates in the last graduating class

2.9 Can attending short courses count towards earning credits for a university degree program? Yes No

If yes, please explain how.....

Section 3: Challenges

3.1 What are the 3 biggest challenges your country faces in strengthening the social service workforce? Please check the **top three**:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> low salaries | <input type="checkbox"/> lack of training and professional knowledge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> high workload | <input type="checkbox"/> poor supervision and support system |
| <input type="checkbox"/> low motivation | <input type="checkbox"/> limited resources to work with |
| <input type="checkbox"/> low authority | <input type="checkbox"/> ineffective interagency collaboration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lack of clarity in roles/performance expectations | <input type="checkbox"/> poor work conditions/facilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lack of career advancement opportunities | <input type="checkbox"/> weak information management, records, data management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other _____ | |

Section 4: Opportunities

4.1 Are there compelling current initiatives underway or upcoming opportunities related to developing and training the workforce in your country that you think should be highlighted? These examples will be considered when developing a future national workforce strengthening plan, to ensure future initiatives build on existing practice. Please briefly describe and/or send a relevant report with your response to this survey.

Organization/ Project Name	Description of the opportunity or initiative

4.2 What are some of the country's most important milestones and achievements in the last 5 years with regard to developing and training the social service workforce? (If there are multiple important milestones, feel free to prioritize them)

J.4 Institutional Survey-Professional Organization**Section 1: Institutional Information**1.1 Name of Institution/
Organization:

Name of Professional Association

1.2 Location:

*Town/City**Province/State*

1.3 Contact person:

*First Name**Last Name*

1.4 Title:

Work title/ name of position

1.5 Email:

*Contact person email address***Section 2: Professional Association Data****2.1 Who are the association's target groups? Which professional/paraprofessional is involved in social service workforce?**

The definition of "Social Service Workforce" is

2.2 How many members does the association have?**2.3** How many staff does the association employ?**2.4** Does the association have an office or share office space with another organization? Yes | No**2.5** Is the association active in these areas? Please check any that apply Has a current website Holds at least four meetings per year Holds an annual conference Provides professional development / short courses Active in international associations (IFSW, etc) Active on Facebook Active on Twitter Writes blogs Produces newsletter Produces a journal Produces an annual report Conducts research Other, please describe _____**2.6** Does the association organize events around World Social Work Day, such as in March? Yes | No**If yes, please describe.....**

2.7 Does the association require members to sign a code of ethics? Yes | No

If no, does another entity? Yes | No

Please describe.....

2.8 Does the association, or another entity in the country, provide licensing or registration for the profession it promotes? Yes | No

If yes, please provide the name or title of the policy or legislation

2.9 Does the association require member compliance to minimum standards for continuous professional development and learning (such as number of training hours)? Yes | No

If yes, please describe.....

2.10 Is the association described or mandated in national policies or legislation? Yes | No

If yes, please provide the name or title of the policy or legislation

Section 3: Challenges

3.1 What are the 3 biggest challenges your country faces in strengthening the social service workforce? Please check the **top three**:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> low salaries | <input type="checkbox"/> lack of training and professional knowledge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> high workload | <input type="checkbox"/> poor supervision and support system |
| <input type="checkbox"/> low motivation | <input type="checkbox"/> limited resources to work with |
| <input type="checkbox"/> low authority | <input type="checkbox"/> ineffective interagency collaboration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lack of clarity in roles/performance expectations | <input type="checkbox"/> poor work conditions/facilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lack of career advancement opportunities management | <input type="checkbox"/> weak information management, records, data |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other _____ | |

Section 4: Opportunities

4.1 Is this association involved in current initiatives related to planning, developing or supporting the workforce in your country that you think should be highlighted? What opportunities for future engagement do you foresee? These examples will be considered when developing a future national workforce strengthening plan, to ensure future initiatives build on existing practice. Please use the Framework for Strengthening the Social Service Workforce found here as a guide in order to help highlight innovative and effective approaches to strengthening the workforce. Please provide a brief description and/or send a relevant report with your response to this survey.

Primary category of the initiative	Organization/ Project Name	Description of the initiative
Planning		
Developing		
Supporting		

4.2 What are some of the country's most important milestones and achievements in the last 5 years related to strengthening the government social service workforce? (If there are multiple important milestones, feel free to prioritize them).

J.5 Survey of Social Service Workers**Section 1: Institutional Information**

1.1 Employer:

*Name of the Organization/ Ministry /
 Department/Institution you are presently working for*

1.2 Title:

Work title/ name of position

1.3 Location:

Town/City

Province/State

1.4 Your age:

- under 25 26-35 36-45
 46-55 56-65 66 and over

1.5 Your Gender: Female Male

1.6 Highest level of education / academic qualification (select one)

- University Degree (BA, MA, PhD) relevant to the social service workforce (minimum 3 years training at university)
 () BA (please provide name of degree)
 () MA (please provide name of degree)
 () PhD (please provide name of degree)
- University Degree (BA, MA, PhD) unrelated to the social service workforce (minimum 3 years training university)
 () BA (please provide name of degree)
 () MA (please provide name of degree)
 () PhD (please provide name of degree)
- Diploma or certificate program relevant to the social service workforce (minimum 1 year training at university)
 (Please provide the name of course) _____
- Diploma or certificate program unrelated to the social service workforce (minimum 1 year training at university)
 (Please provide the name of course) _____
- Short-term training relevant to the social service workforce (less than 1 year)
 (Please provide the name of course) _____
- Short-term training unrelated to the social service workforce (less than 1 year)
 (Please provide the name of course) _____
- No relevant training

1.7 What year did you complete your highest level of education? _____

Section 2: Professional Association Data

2.1 Please describe the main area of your work: (add job functions as outlined in national definition of SSW)
Definition of "Social Service Workforce" is

function one function two function three function four function five

2.2 Do you have job a description? Yes | No

If No, please explain

2.3 Does the work you do correspond with your job description? Yes | No

If No, please explain

2.4 Please identify the level of major challenges you are facing in your daily work?

Item	fully agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	fully disagree
Salary rate is not consistent with qualifications and experience					
high workload					
low motivation					
low authority					
lack of clarity in roles/performance expectations					
poor work conditions/facilities					
lack of career advancement opportunities					
weak information management, records, data management					
lack of training and professional knowledge					
poor supervision and support system					
limited resources to work with					
ineffective interagency collaboration					

other

If Other, please explain

2.5 How long have you been employed in your current position?

less than 1 year 1 – 2 years 3 - 4 years 5 - 9 years 10 years or more

2.6 How long have you been employed in the field of social services?

less than 1 year 1 – 2 years 3 - 4 years 5 - 9 years 10 years or more

Please note if you strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statements

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2.7 I am satisfied with my pay					
2.8 I have the proper supplies and equipment to do my job					
2.9 I feel that I am making a positive impact in people's lives through this job					
2.10 My employer has put adequate measures in place to ensure the safety and security of everyone in my workplace					

Section 3: Supervision

3.1 Do you have an immediate supervisor? Yes | No

If yes, please specify the position/position name of your supervisor or supervisor

If not, please specify the position/position of the person whose performance you will report

3.2 How often do you meet with your supervisor one on one? (Individual meeting for work performance report/follow up on assigned work performance)

Weekly Monthly 3-4 times a year less often never

3.3 What type of support does your supervisor provide? (please check the appropriate box for each question)

To me, my supervisor....	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. Sets clear job performance expectations					
b. Provides constructive feedback on my work skills					
c. Helps with decision making in difficult situations					
d. Helps me to learn best practices					
e. Discusses ethical aspects of the work with me					
f. Discusses my personal safety and comfort in my role					
g. Helps me with self-care and stress management tips					
h. Discusses my professional development and career goals					
i. Helps identify new training opportunities					
j. Discusses administrative issues					

3.4 How often do you have group supervision or structured peer support sessions?

- Weekly Monthly 3-4 times a year less often never

3.5 Do you consider the existing supervision system effective for meeting your needs? Yes | No

Please provide any additional feedback or recommendations related to supervision

Section 4: Training

Please note if you strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statements:

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4.1 The training I have is adequate to successfully do my job.					
4.2 My organization have conducted survey to understand my needs					
4.3 My organization encourages my participation in training					
4.4 My organization support my participation in training, i.e., by allow me to be absent from work while in training.					
4.5 Trainings are accessible for me (geographically close, or travel budget is provided)					
4.6 Trainings are financially accessible for me					
4.7 I am given enough guidance and training to help me in my career path					
4.8 Before I started this job, I had an orientation that helped me learn about my organization and role					

Please provide any additional feedback or recommendations related to training

4.7 Do you feel competent in your knowledge to identify potential abuse, exploitation, neglect, or violence?

- Very competent Competent Somewhat competent
 Not at all Does not apply to my work

4.8 Do you feel competent in your knowledge to appropriately respond to and help children and families affected by abuse, exploitation, neglect, or violence?

- Very competent Competent Somewhat competent
 Not at all Does not apply to my work

4.9 Do you feel competent in your knowledge to facilitate an assessment of needs and strengths of clients and families, that includes aspects of health, education, social protection and child protection?

- Very competent Competent Somewhat competent
 Not at all Does not apply to my work

4.10 Do you feel competent to actively engage clients in developing a case plan to address their strengths and needs?

- Very competent Competent Somewhat competent
 Not at all Does not apply to my work

4.11 Do you feel competent to make referrals to available programs and services for the population of clients that you serve?

- Very competent Competent Somewhat competent
 Not at all Does not apply to my work

Section 5: Professional Association

5.1 Are you a member of a professional association? Yes | No

If yes, please provide the name of the association

5.2 How long have you been a member of your professional association?

- less than 1 year 1 – 2 years 3 - 4 years 5 years or more

5.3 Do you receive any support from the professional association? Yes | No

If yes, please explain

5.4 Do you feel you benefit professionally by being a member of the association? Yes | No

If yes, please explain

5.5 Did the professional association require you to sign a code of ethics? Yes | No

If yes, please explain

J.6. Question Guidelines for Focus Groups/In-depth Interviews - Expert Group

1. Social Workforce Planning

1.1 Strategy for planning human resources for the social service workforce

- 1) In Thailand, who should be included in the social work workforce (e.g., professionals, paraprofessionals, and volunteers), and how should each group define its roles and responsibilities to meet the needs of its target groups?
- 2) Should appropriate staffing and job rotation be promoted between different groups of the social work workforce, and how should appropriate delegation of authority and responsibility be distributed?
- 3) How should social worker education and training systems be integrated to meet future workforce needs?
- 4) In determining the appropriate ratio of workers to service users, what principles/ideas should be considered relevant in Thailand?
- 5) How can effective mechanisms and capabilities for financing, governance, and cost-effective strategies be developed at the national and corporate levels?
- 6) Are there any socio-cultural factors that promote and hinder family members' access to social services and the family social work workforce? If so, what strategic approaches are needed to facilitate access to appropriate social services or reduce barriers to accessing social services?

1.2 Analysis and decision-making by human resource database

- 1) A Resources Information System (HRIS) that will help manage the social work workforce can be used to plan the expected workforce. What should it look like, and what information should be included?
- 2) For the central database of the social service workforce numbers at the national level? Why? To provide a view of the country's overall social service workforce numbers.

1.3 Improving practices and systems for recruiting, hiring, and deploying that consider urban areas (inner and outer suburbs), rural areas, and decentralization plans

- 1) Are the number of diplomas, associate degrees, and degree courses in social work and related fields sufficient to produce social workers to enter the system? How?
- 2) What is your perspective on building or strengthening the employment system and distributing social workers to unreached areas?

1.4 Building partnerships and alliances to enhance leadership and support among various stakeholders.

- 1) How should different sectors work together to build political will, legal frameworks, and resource allocation to strengthen and support the social service workforce?
- 2) Who should lead the development of a national agenda for social services, identifying the roles and responsibilities of government and the private sector, national and local actors, in putting those agendas into practice, including focusing on work and increasing budget commitment in the social service system?

2. Development of human resources for the social service workforce

2.1 Organizing education and training for social workers consistent with efforts to plan effective workforces.

- 1) Developing capacity for planning, budgeting, and providing necessary resources for improving pre-service education systems (pre-service education) and in-service training. How should it be?
- 2) Should a "special channel" exist for social welfare education and training courses to respond to urgent and critical needs? Why?

2.2 Ensure that the curriculum incorporates local/indigenous knowledge and international best practices to improve the well-being of vulnerable groups.

- 1) What are your views on reviewing the curriculum to make it current and relevant to societal dynamics and emphasizing Indigenous knowledge and cultural competencies that empower social care practitioners to harness best practices within their communities (e.g., community-based care)?
- 2) How can the curriculum for the social service workforce be strengthened in terms of practical knowledge and working with specific target groups?

2.3 Strengthening faculty and teaching

- 1) Should qualifications be defined for social work/other social worker educators or educators? And how should there be a system to support and develop educators or teachers in social work/other related fields to learn new perspectives and approaches to work, and to promote the exchange of ideas and good practices?
- 2) Field training should be developed, including field supervision, requiring field experiences for social work and related students before graduation, and promoting field experiences for paraprofessionals.

2.4 Providing a variety of in-service development opportunities for operators.

- 1) How should social work and related education curricula be adapted to meet current needs (e.g., flexible and/or Internet- or smartphone-based courses where possible for community workers or caregivers who live in remote areas or cannot leave work to attend full-time training)?
- 2) What are your opinions on the following issues?
 - Promoting the social service workforce to access additional lessons learned during their work.
 - Qualification certification with an examination to obtain higher qualifications.
 - Expanding the social service workforce's access to certificate or degree programs.

3. Supporting human resources for social workers

3.1 Developing or strengthening a system to improve and maintain the efficiency of social welfare personnel.

- 1) What is the current supervision system, and how should the mechanism be improved (including leadership development) to supervise and manage social workers? And to find special mechanisms necessary for community operators to be effective.

3.2 Tool development resources and initiatives to improve job satisfaction and retention

- 1) How should the social service workforce be supported to perform their responsibilities effectively?
- 2) What are your views on career advancement for social workers and their connection to social worker retention?

3.3 Support professional organizations in their efforts to enhance professional growth and human resources development for the social service workforce.

- 1) What mechanisms should be in place to strengthen existing and newly established professional organizations?
- 2) How should standards and professional ethics for the social service workforce be promoted?
- 3) How should practitioners be encouraged to adhere to professional standards and professional ethics?
- 4) Should networking be promoted or not? How (e.g., worker lists, electronic job postings, job markets, social media)?
- 5) How important is it to make position statements and policies beyond lobbying decision-makers on behalf of and in support of social workers, and which agencies should host them, or how should relevant parties work together?

J.7 Question Guidelines for Focus Groups/In-depth Interviews - The Social Service Workforce Group

Manpower Planning the Social Service Workforce

1.1 Strategy for planning human resources for the social service workforce

- 1) From your fieldwork experience, are there any socio-cultural factors? What barriers and supports exist for families accessing social services and social workers? If so, please provide examples.

Human resource development for the social service workforce

1.1 Organizing education and training for the social service workforce consistent with practical workforce planning efforts.

- 1) Is pre-service education and in-service training adequate? What should the format be to prepare the social service workforce to work with diverse target groups?
- 2) Should a “special channel” exist for social welfare education and training courses to respond to urgent and critical needs? Why?

1.2 Ensure that the curriculum incorporates local/indigenous knowledge and international best practices to improve the well-being of vulnerable groups.

- 1) What are your views on reviewing the curriculum to make it current and relevant to societal dynamics and emphasizing indigenous knowledge and cultural competencies that empower social care practitioners to harness best practices within their communities (e.g., community-based care)?
- 2) How can the curriculum for social workers be strengthened in terms of practical knowledge and working with specific target groups?

1.3 Strengthening faculty and teaching

How should capacity for field training be developed, including field supervision, requiring field experiences for social work and related students before graduation, and promoting field experiences for paraprofessionals?

1.4 Providing a variety of in-service development opportunities for operators.

- 1) How should social work and related education curricula be adapted to meet current needs, such as providing flexible and/or Internet- or smartphone-based courses (where possible) for community-level practitioners or caregivers who live in remote areas or cannot leave work to attend full-time training?
- 2) What are your views on promoting access to more practical lessons and credentials through examinations leading to higher qualifications, and expanding access to diploma or degree programs for the social service workforce?
- 3) Are there cultural factors and influences that promote and hinder families' access to social services and the family social service workforce? If so, how are you supported or prepared to meet this challenge?

2. Supporting human resources for the social service workforce

2.1 Developing or enhancing a system to improve and maintain the efficiency of social welfare personnel.

What is the current supervision system, and how should the mechanism be improved (including leadership development) to supervise and manage social workers and find out the special mechanisms necessary for workers in the community to be effective?

2.2 Tool development resources and initiatives to improve job satisfaction and retention

- 1) What are the social service workforce's key challenges, and what are your perspectives on improving or developing them?
- 2) How should workers be supported to perform their responsibilities effectively?
- 3) What are your views on career advancement for the social service workforce and their connection to social worker retention?
- 4) To what extent does the social service workforce have access to technology that supports their work, and what is the impact of technology on service delivery?

2.3 Support professional organizations to enhance professional growth and human resources development for the social service workforce.

- 1) How should the standards and professional ethics of the social service workforce be promoted?
- 2) How should practitioners be encouraged to adhere to professional standards and professional ethics?
- 3) Should networking be promoted through worker lists, electronic job postings, job markets, and social media?

J.8 Information Sheet: Project title “An Assessment of Social Service Workforce in Thailand”

This collaborative project titled “Assessment of the Social Service Workforce in Thailand,” conducted by the Thailand Association of Social Workers and UNICEF Thailand, aims to analyze the social service workforce across various administrative levels, including central, regional, provincial, and local levels, involving both government and non-government entities along with other stakeholders. The assessment seeks to evaluate the current human, financial, and technical capabilities and identify strengths, potential gaps, and bottlenecks in meeting stakeholders’ responsibilities per relevant laws. Additionally, it will highlight opportunities for targeted strategies to address resource capacity challenges and provide recommendations to enhance human, financial, and technical resources in the social service sector. The goal is to enhance management, supervision, and performance in national plan coordination and deliver essential interventions at national, regional, and sub-district levels.

The risks linked to taking part in this assessment are minimal. Participants will only respond to questions regarding social service workforce planning, development, and support through surveys or focus group discussions. By agreeing to participate, please be assured that your responses will be kept confidential; any personally identifiable information will be securely stored and accessible only to those directly involved in the study. Please answer all questions. However, if there are any questions you prefer not to answer, you are free to leave them blank. Participation is open to individuals aged 18 years or older. If you choose not to participate, kindly return the survey blank or opt out of providing any information.

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If you have any concerns about the purpose and nature of the assessment, please do not hesitate to contact the principal investigator or project coordinator using the contact information provided above.

Please keep this sheet for your reference.

J.9 Informed Consent Form - Study Title: Determinants of Self-Acceptance of Disability

Before signing this form, the investigator provided information about the assessment objectives, the data collection process, and the benefits and risks associated with this assessment. Additionally, the investigator addressed all my research-related questions.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that my participation in this study is voluntary, and I can withdraw at any time. I understand I can complete the survey questionnaire without including identifiers such as name, identification number, address, and phone number. All survey responses will be securely stored in a locked cabinet, and the completed surveys or electronic data will be transferred to investigators using appropriate methods/devices. Only investigators and coordinators will have access to this information. The assessment findings will not link individuals to specific responses or conclusions.

Having reviewed the information provided regarding this assessment, I voluntarily agree to participate in this study by signing this informed consent.

Participant's signature _____ Date ___/___/___

Please return the signed informed consent form to the investigator.

Annex K: Good Practice of Social Service Workforce Planning, Developing, and Supporting

1. Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA.)

Bangkok (BMA), the capital of Thailand, is a unique local government organization under Decentralized system, distinct from other regions in the country. Its administration is governed specifically under the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration Act B.E. 2528 (1985). The planning, development, and support of social workers in Bangkok are regarded as good practices, particularly in terms of strategic formulation and workforce planning based on analysis of local population needs. This approach allows for effective workforce management that is responsive to the area's needs and social dynamics. Bangkok is notably adaptable to change, with a flexible structure and clear plans addressing social transformation. Political leadership, especially with governors elected through political processes, also influences manpower planning—particularly in aligning with policies focused on improving quality of life and the environment. As a result, human development is prioritized. Social workers, as key professionals working with vulnerable groups, are both recognized and in demand. There is also a growing emphasis on the standardization of their roles and the expansion of their positions to better cover service areas.

A. Workforce Planning

The workforce planning strategy for social workers in Bangkok is aligned with the Bangkok Development Plan and the policy direction of the city's governor, which prioritizes the quality of life, particularly in caring for vulnerable populations residing in the capital. Accordingly, the workforce strategy emphasizes social development through public welfare services, primarily involving personnel such as social developers, psychologists, and social workers.

In addition, volunteers are engaged in accordance with Bangkok's regulations, and workforce analysis is conducted to determine the required number of personnel in each profession. In response to the rising complexity and volume of social issues, Bangkok has restructured certain roles—for instance, converting district-level social development worker positions into social worker roles to apply professional social work practices in addressing problems. Moreover, psychologists have been added to strengthen drug rehabilitation initiatives, with administrative units overseeing the resolution of such issues.

The allocation of personnel in each position is based on the number of service users in each area to ensure alignment between workforce capacity and local needs.

B. Implementation of the Strategic Plan

The implementation of Bangkok's strategic plan follows a structured and sequential process. It begins with operational execution at the district level, led by the Social Development Division of the Central Office. This is carried out in coordination with ministry-level agencies, such as the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, as well as other relevant government bodies.

The strategy involves proactively adjusting the workforce structure based on forecasts of future social trends—such as the rising elderly population—which in turn influences budget allocation for service facilities and personnel planning. This includes setting a framework for key roles such as psychologists, social workers, social development workers, and human resource staff.

A notable aspect of the plan is the collaboration with Navamindradhiraj University, particularly with Vajira Hospital serving as a core unit providing care and consultation for the elderly. This operational model reflects a target group-centered approach, whereby the needs of vulnerable populations shape both the structure and direction of service delivery.

C. Volunteer Mentor System and Workforce Planning in BMA.

The Volunteer Mentor System under the BMA operates through employee-based positions, including roles such as nannies in community childcare centers managed by local residents. This system has undergone progressive development, with enhancements to educational qualifications (up to the bachelor's degree level), salary structures, and welfare benefits. For individuals with at least five years of relevant experience, Bangkok provides a special pathway to take the civil service examination—an incentive mechanism designed to promote motivation, career progression, and long-term job stability. The success of this model, particularly in advancing Bangkok-operated childcare centers, has earned international recognition and was notably praised by Mr. Kofi Atta Annan, then Secretary-General of the United Nations, during his visit.

D. Employment Conditions

BMA operates with a variety of employment types, including civil servants, permanent employees, temporary employees, and individual contract workers. The type of employment is determined by the specific needs of each department. For roles that are hazardous, involve sanitation, or are difficult to fill, Bangkok may utilize private sector employment arrangements or offer additional compensation to attract workers.

E. Workforce Development Framework

BMA's personnel development system applies across all employment categories, including temporary staff. All workers are given access to structured training programs. The Central Office organizes standardized training courses overseen by the Office of the Civil Service Commission. In parallel, the Policy and Planning Division focuses on specialized human resource development, aligning with departmental functions and fostering inter-agency networking.

Training programs are also tailored to reflect the governor's operational policies. One such initiative is the "Capillary Course," aimed at enhancing the understanding of Bangkok's operational framework among lower-tier employees. The course emphasizes missions related to quality of life, social development, social welfare, and social work.

Performance indicators are used to evaluate the success of these initiatives. Furthermore, Bangkok supports professional development by offering scholarships for advanced studies at the master's and doctoral levels.

F. Proportion of Personnel and Use of Technology in Service Delivery

Although manpower planning in BMA follows the principles set by the Civil Service Commission, the city faces increasing pressure from the rapid rise in social issues. At the same time, legal provisions prohibit personnel expenses from exceeding 40 percent of the total budget. Currently, BMA's personnel expenditure stands at approximately 34–35 percent.

To manage this constraint effectively, BMA is leveraging technology to enhance operational efficiency across various sectors—particularly in the delivery of social services. For example, the use of digital systems for registering persons with disabilities and issuing hospital certifications for submission to district offices helps streamline procedures, reduce processing time, and ultimately improve the quality of life for residents.

G. Human Resource Development

BMA's human resource development efforts benefit from funding support provided by various sources, including the National Health Security Office, the Wang Wat Company (Palace-Temple-Company) network, and particularly temples, which maintain educational promotion funds. These funds support as many as 437 schools through scholarships, teacher recruitment, and financial supplementation in areas where school budgets are insufficient.

One of BMA's key advantages lies in its data-driven planning approach, which systematically identifies strengths, weaknesses, and risks. With access to comprehensive databases, the city is able to effectively analyze challenges and implement targeted solutions. This includes addressing pain points, fostering innovative practices, and encouraging the adoption of new ideas. The system is further reinforced by the use of awards and recognition as motivational tools to drive continuous improvement.

H. Multiculturalism in Bangkok

Bangkok is experiencing a growing number of foreign residents, both documented and undocumented. In line with children's rights and human rights principles, the city must ensure access to education, public health, and social services for all. This responsibility places demands on both the budget and manpower of BMA.

I. Human Resource Management for Service Providers

To support effective manpower planning, a survey was conducted on personnel data—covering positions, age, education, and turnover rates. Given the governor's policy focus on vulnerable groups, the survey also included roles in social welfare, nursing, psychology, and social work. Key considerations included budget constraints, staffing levels, and workforce composition, forming a vital database for executive decision-making. However, challenges remain—particularly the loss of experienced personnel through resignation or retirement and the difficulty in recruiting skilled replacements. In response, a study was initiated on using local committees and hiring skilled elderly professionals on an hourly basis.

J. Need for a Centralized Database at the Civil Service Commission

As the Civil Service Commission plays a crucial role in manpower planning, it should serve as the central database hub. Currently, data collection systems across departments are fragmented, hindering comprehensive workforce analysis. Local-level decentralization efforts still lack adequate expertise, making it difficult for executives to access accurate data and assess manpower needs. BMA's approach focuses on aligning staffing with its specific missions and tasks to identify critical workforce gaps.

K. Addressing Personnel Shortages in Bangkok

Social workers in BMA must hold a professional license, leading to shortages. Those unable to pass Part A of the licensing exam must work as social work assistants for five years before becoming eligible for special recruitment. To address this, positions have been reclassified—from social development workers to licensed social workers. For professions in short supply, such as teachers and nurses, BMA has signed MOUs with academic institutions to develop tailored curricula and offer scholarships to local students, who will then serve in BMA. The city is also considering adjustments to the cost of living allowance to improve recruitment and retention.

L. Distribution of Service Systems

Currently, 90 percent of Bangkok residents have access to social services. Service providers are able to deliver support across most areas, with only a few locations serving specific population groups. The Social Welfare Division oversees this effort, utilizing information technology to survey local areas and enhance the coverage and efficiency of the social service system.

M. Workforce Support in Bangkok

Work Preparation

Before commencing work, personnel under BMA attend an orientation program that covers general laws and administrative structures. While this orientation may not delve deeply into specific job functions, a six-month trial period is implemented, during which each new employee is paired with a mentor. The mentorship aims to facilitate knowledge sharing, role clarity, adaptation, problem-solving, public engagement, and practical fieldwork experience.

Internships for Social Work Students

BMA provides opportunities for social work students to undertake internships across departments involved in social service delivery. Interns are encouraged to develop projects aligned with their interests, which may be used for academic evaluation and curriculum development by their institutions.

Supervision

Every new social worker in field placement is assigned a supervisor, a team leader for evaluation, and a mentor. Mentors are selected based on their understanding of both the supervisory process and the nature of the role, ensuring effective guidance and support for new practitioners.

Career Progression

Social work practice in BMA allows progression to the specialist level, which includes leadership roles within departments. Advancement is subject to a formal selection process, which may include assessments based on research and development contributions. However, limitations in staffing frameworks prevent all qualified personnel from being accommodated in higher positions.

Network Building

Professional associations and clubs for social workers in BMA are established independently, as they are not formally regulated under BMA framework. While these networks can advocate for professional needs and standards, their impact is often constrained by bureaucratic limitations, leading to slow progress in policy influence.

Strengths of BMA's Approach

Bangkok demonstrates potential to be recognized as a high-performing organization (Best Practice) due to the proactive and adaptable management approach of the Office of the Social Welfare Promotion Commission. This includes flexible operations, a clear vision for social change, and effective manpower planning. The direct administrative link to the governor—who is politically elected—further facilitates alignment with public policy priorities, particularly those focused on improving quality of life and environmental conditions.

Social workers, as key professionals responsible for supporting vulnerable groups, are seen as essential personnel. There is a recognized need for standardized practices and expanded roles to ensure broader service coverage and sustained professional development.

2. The Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection, Ministry of Justice (DJOP, MOJ)

Strategy for Workforce Planning

The Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection, operates under centralized system of the government, recognizes social workers as its core mission and principal line of service. The department operates under a clearly defined social worker process and has established a strategy focused on the correction, treatment, rehabilitation, assistance, and post-release follow-up of children and youth.

This strategic focus provides a clear framework for both operational and workforce development. To strengthen its efforts, the department aims to adopt successful international practices, using research-based approaches to pilot intensive and continuous correction, treatment, rehabilitation, and follow-up programs. These initiatives are intended to reduce the rate of reoffending among children and youth.

To support this direction, the Division of Human Resources Management and Social Worker has developed plans to secure funding for workforce development. This includes providing intensive training programs for personnel, both domestically and internationally, and conducting practical research in pilot areas. The findings from these initiatives will be used to inform and enhance future manpower planning, ensuring the department's workforce is well-equipped to deliver on its strategic goals.

Strategy for planning the workforce of social welfare practitioners IRC

The strategy for planning the IRC social work workforce involves analyzing the workforce of the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection, referred to as workload analysis, using the Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) formula based on the guidelines of the Office of the Civil Service Commission. This approach is used to support workforce requests and to present staffing needs to the executives, indicating that each unit typically requires approximately two social workers. For larger training centers with over 300 children and youth, three to four social workers may be necessary.

At the time of the initial workload analysis, the role of IRC social workers was not yet included. Based on the existing workload, the standard was approximately one social worker per 20 children and youth. However, after conducting research based on the performance of IRC social workers, informed by a study visit to the Netherlands which recommended a ratio of one social worker per 15 to 20 children, the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection piloted the IRC model in actual operations. The findings concluded that the appropriate ratio in Thailand is one social worker per 16 children.

When this ratio was compared with the FTE workload review and analysis, the results were consistent. This is because social workers have clearly defined responsibilities and follow a structured social work process. The research findings have therefore contributed to ensuring that the staffing of social workers is appropriate and well-suited to the requirements of IRC work.

Hiring Conditions

The Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection's employment system has a key strength in requiring social workers to possess relevant educational qualifications upon recruitment, enabling them to begin work immediately without the need for extensive preliminary training. Therefore, the time required for data collection aligns closely with the actual duration of the Human Resource Development Project.

A critical success factor in human resource management is the presence of clear work policies and the Department's strong focus on social worker as its primary mission. In addition, the establishment of well-defined positions and responsibilities further supports effective workforce management.

An important element contributing to this success was the involvement of individuals who performed dual roles as both social workers and personnel within the Human Resource Management Division, who also served as members of the IRC project research team. Their participation at every stage of the project fostered a deep understanding of operational needs and helped drive initiatives to strengthen both knowledge development and workforce operations.

The IRC project, conducted over a period of approximately 2-3 years (beginning in 2014 and concluding in 2016), produced clear and practical data. It demonstrated the effectiveness of seamless care for children and youth, with each social worker responsible for 16 children. This evidence-based data has been instrumental in supporting manpower requests and the allocation of new civil servant positions.

Addressing the shortage of personnel

Due to government manpower management measures aimed at limiting the increase in the number of civil servants, it is no longer possible to request additional civil servant positions under the standard framework. Moreover, the Department's missions do not fully align with the criteria set by the Office of the Civil Service Commission for granting new positions. Therefore, alternative approaches must be used.

When requesting manpower allocations, the Department provides functional justifications, focusing on the core mission of social work and the specific duties and operational results of social workers. Providing clear and detailed information has been a critical factor in securing approval for additional staffing.

A key success factor has been the close collaboration between the Human Resource Management Division, the Department's executives, and the operational units, all working together to understand the nature of the work and advocate effectively for resources. Although the allocated manpower has not fully met the ideal pilot project ratio of one social worker per 16 children and youth, the Human Resource Management Division uses statistics on the number of children and youth to distribute additional social workers to training centers implementing the IRC model and to support the expansion of new IRC centers. This strategic manpower management has been an important factor in facilitating the successful operation of the IRC project.

Funding and Budgeting

An additional key factor is that the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection has secured research funding from the Thai Health Promotion Foundation to support both overseas study visits and pilot operational research projects at the Rayong Training Center. Due to the intensive nature of these initiatives, a substantial budget is necessary to support in-depth knowledge training, on-site operations, and expert supervision and monitoring throughout the three-year project period. Furthermore, a human resource plan and budget have also been allocated for IRC care.

Success

The IRC project has proven to be highly successful, emphasizing a working method grounded in the social worker process. Follow-up evaluations indicate that children and youth receiving IRC care have achieved a recidivism rate of less than one percent. Social workers involved in the project have operated almost entirely outside of the traditional system. In the action research phase, social workers functioned independently from the existing structures, a scenario that would not be feasible under normal conditions.

Recognizing the importance of this approach, the executives agreed to formally designate civil servants as social workers. The Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection successfully presented this initiative to the Civil Service Commission, gaining approval to classify personnel into groups and independently assessing the necessary positions.

Despite challenges, such as the inability to obtain additional civil servant positions, the Department has effectively managed its existing personnel resources, marking a significant success. Key lessons learned include the strategies and experiences gained in promoting and strengthening the social worker workforce.

Support from the Executives

An important factor contributing to the project's success was the strong support from the executives. The Director-General at the time, who later became the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice, recognized the significance of the initiative. He directed the Human Resources Management Division to exchange information and discuss the outcomes, which fully met the requirements for expansion to other agencies. As a result, the number of staff increased by approximately 60 people.

Distribution of the Service System

The number of social workers assigned to IRC duties grew from the original 60 to 95 individuals. Across all training centers under the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection, there are now about 244 social workers, with approximately 40% dedicated to IRC work.

However, the situation has evolved. More children are now placed in the initial reception phase because courts are increasingly applying Section 132, paragraph 2. Consequently, there is a need to redistribute social workers to assist with initial reception activities, which will reduce the number stationed solely at training centers.

Currently, each IRC social worker is responsible for 16 children. This caseload includes the entire period from a child's entry into care through to one year after their release, meaning that a child remains under IRC supervision for an extended period. For example, if a child stays in the training center for two years, the IRC will oversee the child's care and reintegration for a total of three years.

Problems and Obstacles

In the early stages, conflicts arose among social workers regarding IRC responsibilities. General social workers expressed concerns that IRC social workers handled only 16 children and received additional allowances. These issues have since been resolved through comprehensive training that has unified the team as one group. Another persistent challenge is the turnover of civil servant social workers. After completing IRC training, many leave their positions to pursue other civil service roles, resulting in the loss of both training budgets and human resources. Additionally, there remains an insufficient number of social workers to meet the current workload demands.

Strengths

The Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection has law and regulations, which underscores the importance of pre-release preparation and post-release follow-up—processes that are central to professional social work. The Act explicitly defines the roles and functions of social workers, reinforcing their legal status. The Department also collaborates extensively with communities and networks, placing a strong focus on prevention work, which has led to an increase in workload.

Progress in Work

When comparing it with the Department of Corrections C8 (Senior Professional Level), the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection initially had four designated positions, while the Department of Corrections had only one. Currently, the number of positions has expanded to ten, reflecting substantial progress. Furthermore, the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection accepts candidates with closed (specialized) social work qualifications, whereas the Department of Corrections allows for broader, open qualifications.

Annex L: Number of Workers in PBOs Classified by Target Population

Target group	Characteristics of the organization	Number of Organizations Responding to the Survey	Number of Workers				Positions of Workers	Note
			Local	Province	National	Total		
Elderly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elderly Club School for the Elderly Elderly Quality of Life Development and Restoration Center Volunteer Association for Elderly Care 	31	1,891	56	1	1,948	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteers Club President/ Club Committee Community Development Officer 	The number of volunteers reported was obtained from 5 organizations
Persones with disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Association of Parents of Persons with Disability Persons with Disability Club 	3	13	1	-	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Club President/Club Committee 	The number of volunteers reported was obtained from 2 organizations
Psychiatric patients	Club	2	No information				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No information 	
Children, youth, women and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth volunteer group Child and Youth Development Organization Children and Youth Council Community Family Development Center Ladies Club 	11	40	15	-	55	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Development Officer Youth Group Chairman President of the Children and Youth Council Club President 	The number of volunteers reported was obtained from 4 organizations
Labor	Labor Volunteer Club	3	208	-	-	208	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labor volunteers President of the Labor Volunteers 	The number of volunteers reported was obtained from 2 organizations

Target group	Characteristics of the organization	Number of Organizations Responding to the Survey	Number of Workers				Positions of Workers	Note
			Local	Province	National	Total		
Those on probation	Probation Volunteer Club	5	171	-	-	171	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probation Volunteer 	The number of volunteers reported was obtained from 1 organization.
Various (elderly/ person with disability/person with special needs/ homeless people/ poor patients / HIV infected people)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association • Development and rehabilitation center • Foundation/ Organization 	8	6	6		12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President of the Association • Director • Community Development Officer • Chairman of the Board 	The number of volunteers reported was obtained from 2 organizations
Disaster Victims and Disaster Relief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer group • Volunteer Center 	2		120		120	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers 	The number of volunteers reported was obtained from 2 organizations
Municipality/ Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village Fund Network • Volunteer Club for Social Development and Human Security • Coordination Center • Subdistrict Administrative Organization/ Municipality 	15	197	23		220	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Development Officer • Community Development Worker • Volunteers • Club President 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numerical data reporting of volunteers was obtained from 8 organizations • There are 4 organizations that state that they have volunteers working in the organization, but do not specify the number.



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