



MOHAMMED ADAMU ADANGBA

State Child Protection Systems Mapping Coordinator, Nigeria



“The child protection systems mapping has awoken our consciousness to do more for our children and families.”



Overview

“Working as a community volunteer providing care for vulnerable children has inspired my life and nurtured my interest in building a career in protecting children,” says Mohammed Adamu Adangba. Starting his career in the midst of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Nigeria, he has seen first-hand the importance of the social service workforce in mitigating the negative impact of the disease and supporting vulnerable children and families. Mohammed describes how fifteen years ago, HIV and AIDS were associated with a very high stigma and it was taboo to even utter the diseases by name, let alone visit a testing center to know one’s status. Many parents died of AIDS and left their children to be cared for by the community. In some cases, children whose parents died of the disease were accused of killing them through witchcraft. There was little legal recourse or child protection at the local level. Mohammed recalls that “children were tormented, traumatized and treated terribly. It was a bad situation.” However, sympathy for their plight moved him, and many others like him, to seek work in child protection, and the social service response through the government and international NGO projects began to grow.

Training and skills

In addition to his volunteer experience, Mohammed has a degree in sociology from Ahmedu Bello University Zaria in Nigeria. “But having a degree is not the same as having the necessary skills and interest required to function as social worker,” he proudly states, reflecting on the time he has spent in the field working with a variety of international NGOs and government stakeholders in the fight against HIV/AIDS. In order to perform his functions as a community facilitator with Save the Children, Mohammed received training on how to identify cases of abuse and how to use the existing structure of the community to provide for the needs of affected children. Now as a state coordinator for child protection systems mapping for the Federal Capital Territory with CapacityPlus, Mohammed has also gained skills in engaging stakeholders in a participatory process of identifying gaps in the current system and prioritizing interventions in line with state priorities and resources.

Typical tasks and responsibilities

After years of volunteering at the community level, Mohammed was nominated by the Network of People Living with HIV and AIDS in Nigeria (NEPWHAN) to assist with a new project through Save the Children focusing on improving the welfare of children through the setting up of Child Protection Committees. These committees were made up of caregivers, community leaders (ward heads), community watch group leaders, women and youth group leaders, teach-

Follow us on Twitter  @SSWAlliance

Become a Member at www.socialserviceworkforce.org

ers, government social workers, health workers and other volunteers. As a community facilitator, his role was to report cases of abuse, but mainly to engage the community in identifying child protection issues and to initiate a local response. With his colleagues, Mohammed used skills gained through training and knowledge of the community to conduct several awareness raising programs to combat damaging myths about how HIV is transmitted. As the community education continued and cases of abuse began to decline, the district head also joined in the child protection efforts and referred cases to Mohammed and supported families with food. Mohammed and his colleagues also assisted with enrolling children into government schools, worked with caregivers on income-generating activities such as soap and bead making, and formed a relationship with government health clinics so that poor caregivers could access basic health services at a subsidized rate. More and more caregivers and children who tested positive were referred to him and he connected them with HIV support groups. "The community became well informed of my role and my interest in child protection was inspired by the degree to which the district head appreciated my service in visiting various women's, youth and community groups to educate them on protecting the needs of the child," Mohammed says.

This increased interest soon led him to join the CapacityPlus Project in Nigeria as a state coordinator on child protection systems mapping. From his experience as a community facilitator, Mohammed realized that one of the biggest gaps in

protecting children was lack of active participation of government. His main tasks now include assessing state agencies and civil society organizations to understand the current child protection system's capacity and how it functions. He also works with these same stakeholders using a participatory process to identify priority gaps for intervention and to align them with ongoing state reforms and available resources. The goal of this mapping exercise is to strengthen the overall child protection system at the state level, improving the case management and referral process so that vulnerable children are identified and cared for in a timely way.

Why he loves his job

From his first experience as a volunteer to his current role in mapping the child protection system today, Mohammed is proud of the progress he has witnessed in Nigeria in responding to HIV/AIDS and strengthening the social service workforce. He recalls the words of Hajia Amina Abubakar, Director of the Gender Department within the Social Development Secretariat, that social service workforce strengthening activities, like the systems mapping, has "awoken our consciousness to do more for our children and families." Mohammed is happy to be a part of his country's ongoing child protection efforts.

The Global Social Service Workforce Alliance would like to thank CapacityPlus/Nigeria for contributing this profile to the "I am a Social Service Worker" series.

Who is the social service workforce?

While capturing any one definition of the social service workforce is challenging, it can be broadly defined to describe a variety of workers – paid and unpaid, governmental and nongovernmental – who staff the social service system and contribute to the care of vulnerable populations. The social service system is comprised of a set of interventions, programs and benefits that are provided by governmental, civil society and community actors to ensure the welfare and protection of socially or economically disadvantaged individuals and families.

What is Social Service Workforce Week?

During this week, advocates will bring attention to and build support for the social service workforce as well as raise awareness about promising workforce strengthening efforts supported by stakeholders around the world. Organized around daily themes focused on areas of practice, the week will allow Alliance members and the public to engage in a dynamic platform of information exchange and advocacy through various forms of social media.

What is CapacityPlus?

CapacityPlus is the USAID-funded global project uniquely focused on the health workforce needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Placing health workers at the center of every effort, CapacityPlus helps partner coun-

tries achieve significant progress in addressing the health worker crisis while also having global impact through alliances with multilateral organizations. In Nigeria, CapacityPlus is supporting the Federal Ministry of Health and other stakeholders to carry out an integrated program of human resources for health activities and is collaborating with the Nigeria Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, UNICEF, and other partners on approaches to strengthen the social service workforce needed for the care of orphans and vulnerable children. As an initial step, CapacityPlus conducted an assessment to gain a better understanding of current social work practice, capacity, and education among both formal cadres of social service providers such as social welfare officers and child welfare officers and informal volunteers and caregivers in Lagos State. CapacityPlus also began mapping the child protection systems in six states in partnership with UNICEF Nigeria and Maestral International to lead local stakeholders through a process that will describe the laws, policies, and structures that currently exist in each state, assist the stakeholders in assessing the system to see what needs to be improved, and identify and cost priority changes.

Learn More

Learn more about Mohammed and other social service workers! Join the conversation on Twitter by using the hashtag #SSWeek and online at www.socialserviceworkforce.org/SSWeek.

"Improving the workforce. Improving lives."