

## Global Social Service Workforce Alliance Symposium

# Panels discuss international workforce support

## NASW members and staff present, network, attend

By Rena Malai, News staff

Participants of the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance's second annual symposium discussed strategies to develop and support the social service workforce internationally.

About 365 attendees — including social work practitioners, educators, students and NASW members — took part in the symposium, either virtually or in person. NASW is part of the alliance's steering committee, and the NASW Foundation is committed to efforts that work to strengthen social work globally.

Social worker Amy Bess, coordinator at the alliance, said the people who make up this workforce provide critical psychosocial support; advocate for laws, policies and programs that promote social justice and well-being; and they are researchers and educators.

"We're here today to talk about the social service workforce; these are the people who are there when individuals, families and communities face challenges," Bess said. "Social service workers promote people's strengths and provide support that is ... family-focused and community-based."

NASW member Robin Mama, chairwoman of the NASW International Committee and a professor and dean at the Monmouth University School of Social Work in New Jersey, presented on one of three panels at the symposium.



Photo by Rena Malai, NASW News

Speakers on the "Developing the Workforce" panel included, from left, moderator Ummuro Adano, senior principal technical adviser for Management Sciences for Health, USA; Robin Mama, chairwoman of NASW's International Committee and a professor and dean at Monmouth University School of Social Work in New Jersey; and Zenuella Sughantha Thumbadoo (Zeni), deputy director of the National Association of Child Care Workers, South Africa. The panel was one of three to present at the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance's second annual symposium, held in June in Washington, D.C.

Mama's panel was called "Developing the Workforce." The other two panels focused on "Planning the Workforce" and "Supporting the Workforce."

Mama spoke about education and training as part of workforce development. She gave an overview of three types of education programs offered for social services internationally; the implications; and faculty recruitment and retention study implications.

"All of these education programs — university, diploma and certificate — offer a range of educational opportunities to people

who attend and participate," Mama said.

One implication she mentioned is a lack of adequately prepared Ph.D. holders in some countries, which can affect research. Depending on whether a person pursues a diploma or certificate type of education program in social services, there could also be a lack of training in a certain area she said.

Other speakers included Karin Heissler, a child protection specialist at UNICEF; Zenuella Sughantha Thumbadoo, deputy director of the National Association

of Child Care Workers in South Africa; and James McCaffery, senior adviser for Training Resources Group and Capacity-Plus.

The symposium was held June 10 at the United States Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C. It was available via webcast, and more than 100 international participants logged on.

Reports called "The State of the Social Service Workforce" and "The Role of Social Service Workforce Development in Care Reform" were also distributed to symposium attendees.

Susan Rubin, assistant director of the NASW Foundation, said the State of the Social Service Workforce 2015 report provides a review of the critical contributions of the workforce in 15 countries.

"It is essential to collect and learn from the data," Rubin said. "The data contained in the report is a first step to better describe, analyze and build efforts to strengthen the social service workforce."

The alliance also hosts a Social Service Workforce Webinar Series. The webinars are free, and NASW members are encouraged to attend, Rubin said.

"I encourage anyone who is interested in getting involved in this kind of work to become a member of the Global Alliance network, as it provides a great connection to an international network and shared information," she said. "There is no cost to join. The Global Alliance sends out notices to its members and provides them access to a wealth of information."

The mission of the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance is to promote the knowledge of evidence, resources and tools, and political will and action needed to address key social service workforce challenges, especially within low- to middle-income countries. For more information, visit: [socialserviceworkforce.org](http://socialserviceworkforce.org).

The symposium is available for view on YouTube at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=OeEJizjW27E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OeEJizjW27E).

**For more information on the NASW Foundation, visit: [naswfoundation.org](http://naswfoundation.org).**

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