



Lutendo Maedza Team Supervisor and Mentor, NACCW, South Africa



“For me, it’s an opportunity to bring a permanent change to someone’s life.”



Overview

It’s 8:45 p.m. on a Tuesday night, and Lutendo Maedza is still at the home of a family supported by one of the workers she supervises. She is checking in with Lughile Ngomane to provide advice and support where needed. She is a team supervisor to four mentors who oversee 120 child and youth care workers (CYCWs). It’s been a long day, but she loves her work.

Training and skills development

Since 2005, Maedza has been a CYCW in her community of Limpopo, the northernmost province in South Africa. After additional training, she became a team supervisor and mentor in 2005. “I did not even know about child and youth care work as a career. I was busy volunteering in the community, through services like community policing and home-based care. Then I heard about Isibindi. I applied and have fit in very well.”

The Isibindi program

Maedza is one of more than 4,400 CYCWs who have been trained through the Isibindi program. Isibindi is serving more than 200,000 vulnerable children nationwide. The workers help families in their immediate communities by going door-to-door to assess needs and offer support to those who need it. The workers monitor a child’s progress, acting as their confidant and providing support in various areas as needed in a child’s life. CYCWs build relationships with children through interaction in typical daily routines- cooking together, reading, household chores and life skills. All of the workers are supervised by trained mentors.

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Maedza believes it is vital to help develop the skills of the child and youth care workers she mentors, including ensuring the best interest of the child in all aspects of decision-making and exercising professional judgement when facing challenging situations.

Through Isibindi, all CYCWs receive training over the course of approximately 18-months. They attend trainings 1-2 days a month while working full-time, directly applying the skills they are learning. Maedza believes the behavior management and emotional intelligence courses are especially valuable in this work.

Addressing a need

Limpopo is the South African province with the highest level of poverty, with nearly 79% of the population living below the national poverty line. There is a great need for people like Maedza who ensure vulnerable children are receiving the social services and support they need. The Isibindi program was developed by the National Association of Child Care Workers in South Africa, and has since been replicated nationally and in Zambia and Kenya. Maedza attended the recent NACCW Biennial Conference in Cape Town in July 2015. There she learned more about the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance and joined as a member.

Her favorite aspect of the job is helping a young person feel that they are important. She has witnessed the impact of her work. Sixteen-years-old at the time, Mpho was the head of his household, living with his younger sibling. He struggled to stay in school, but with Maedza's encouragement, he went on to attend university. The first in his family to do so, he graduated with a degree in engineering and then obtained an internship. Now 25-years-old, he owns his own business.

"What I learned from his story is resilience," she said. "You must never give up and trust that the process will help."



"Improving the workforce. Improving lives."

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 the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance?

The Global Social Service Workforce Alliance works toward a world where a well-planned, well-trained and well-supported social service workforce effectively delivers promising practices that improve the lives of vulnerable populations. Launched in June 2013, the mission of the Alliance is to promote the knowledge and evidence, resources and tools and political will and action needed to address key social service workforce challenges, especially within low- to middle-income countries.

The Alliance is funded by PEPFAR/USAID and the GHR Foundation. IntraHealth International acts as host and fiscal sponsor of the Alliance.

Learn More

Learn more about Maedza and other social service workers! Join the conversation on Twitter using the hashtag #SSWWeek, on our Facebook page and at www.socialserviceworkforce.org/SSWWeek.