



# MÓNICA MARIELA MAYORGA AYALA

## *Child Protection and Care Systems Strengthening Coordinator*

### Catholic Relief Services, Guatemala



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#### Overview of role

I provide strategic leadership for strengthening the child protection and care system in Guatemala. I facilitate communications and advocacy to support families and children who have entered the protection system, focusing specifically on childcare reform, and represent Catholic Relief Services at the national level working with the governmental and civil society institutions that contribute to the strengthening of systems for the protection of children.

#### Typical tasks

My typical tasks include advising government institutions on best practices aimed at sustainable and safe family reunification, prevention of separation and promotion of foster care in a family environment. I also participate in coordination meetings with partner institutions, faith-based institutions, and others contributing to childcare reform; and facilitate training processes in relation to the prevention of unnecessary family separation, and determining the best interests of the child. I also provide advice and technical support for child protection strategies and work with groups of young people with lived experience in residential care to become spokespersons for care reform.

#### Training and skills

I am a lawyer and notary by profession with a specialization in human rights and archival research. I have 15 years of experience working with children and adolescents. Of these, I spent five years in the litigation of cases of adolescents in conflict with the criminal law, seven years in the protection of girls and adolescents who were victims of sexual violence, exploitation and trafficking in persons, and three years working with Catholic Relief Services implementing the "Changing the Way We Care" initiative.

My experience has been mainly focused on contributing to the

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development of a functional legal-social protection system, where children and adolescents in general, as well as victims, survivors and their families, are protected, empowered and restored in their human rights.

## Motivation

My entire professional career has been devoted to the protection of children and adolescents, and I am passionate about what I do. My main motivation is to be able to help the most vulnerable people, in this case children and adolescents, and to promote and implement real changes for their benefit. Working with the national and local governmental institutions focused on child protection, I advocate for the protection, defense and respect for the rights of children and adolescents, and in doing so

contribute to their integral well-being and development.

## Changing role due to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly changed the way I work, especially since a lot of the work I used to do was face-to-face meetings to ensure the commitment of the parties. Now all meetings are virtual and that sense of relationship and commitment is lost, especially the bond or connection with children and adolescents and their families. However, I believe that the door has been opened to guarantee other things. For example, the training processes are more agile online and this has allowed us to train more personnel in care and protection because they don't have to travel.

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## 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 and well-being of children, youth, adults, older persons, families and communities. 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.

## What is Social Service Workforce Week?

Every year, the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance hosts Social Service Workforce Week. The week serves as an opportunity for advocates to 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 towards a world in which a well-planned, developed and supported social service workforce engages people, structures and organizations to strengthen and build individual, child, family and community well-being and resilience. To achieve this, we work to build and channel the political will, actions, resources and structures necessary for a social service workforce that is knowledgeable, capable, critically reflective, resilient and committed.

The Alliance is an inclusive network of more than 3,000 individual members affiliated with a range of organizations and institutions across 145 countries. The Alliance is currently funded jointly by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), under the Partnerships Plus project implemented by JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc., and by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) through projects at global, regional and national level. The Alliance is a fiscally sponsored project of Tides Center, a U.S. registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

## Learn more

Learn more about Ala and other social service workers! Join the conversation on Twitter using the hashtag #SSWWeek and online at [www.socialserviceworkforce.org/](http://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/)

**Improving the workforce. Improving lives.**