PROPOSED GUIDANCE ON DEVELOPING SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE RATIOS

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RATIONALE FOR SETTING GLOBAL AND REGIONAL MINIMUM RATIOS

- An adequately planned, developed and supported social service workforce is critical to enable equitable access to social protection and basic social welfare.

- It is estimated that 65% of the 169 targets underlying the SDGs will not be reached without effective social services.

- Making the case for investment in workforce development is largely hampered by the absence of a recommended ratio of social service workers per population, and the lack of clear tools to costing the workforce.
KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR USING WORKFORCE RATIOS

- Evidence from education and health sectors suggests that the use of staffing ratios is a useful tool to inform and guide planning and delivery of services.

- Extensive evidence is available regarding the negative effect of a low workforce ratio on staff morale, motivation, burnout, attrition and quality of provided services.

- Calculating the ratio of the social service workforce is a relatively new method

- No current globally recommended optimal ratio of social service workforce to population/child population/other groups defined
DEFINITIONS AND KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Worker to Population Ratio

- Based on the national definition of the social service workforce, the ratio is defined as the number of workers employed in the latest calendar year per 100,000 persons served.

Strengths

- Quick, easy to apply and understand
- Requires little information

Appropriate Conditions

- Most useful in a country at early stage of workforce development with some capacity for planning
- In a country with a strong planning capacity, ratios not often used as a sole planning tool
- Used in combination with other indicators

\[
\text{Worker to Population Ratio} = \frac{\text{# of workers}}{\text{# of total population/child population/specific target groups}} \times 100,000
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DEFINITIONS AND KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Ratios determined in different sectors depend on the definition of the workforce, service standards and other variables.

- The **social service workforce** includes a wide range of governmental and nongovernmental professionals and para professionals and community volunteers, who work with children, youth, adult women and men, the elderly, families and communities, focusing on people with additional needs who are marginalized, in vulnerable situations or at risk, in order to protect and ensure their healthy development and well-being and the fulfilment of their rights.
Geared toward the national-level policy makers and planners in relevant ministries (e.g., social welfare, finance, planning) and local/sub-national authorities responsible for recruitment, deployment and funding of the social service workforce

Aims to offer a step-by-step guidance with key considerations for estimating ratios, using a range of contextualized workforce and population variables, namely:
- The national definition of the social service workforce
- National social service standards and other relevant legal frameworks
- The various aspects of country contexts
UNDERSTANDING THE COUNTRY CONTEXT

**ECONOMY**

- Low income
- Lower-middle income
- Upper-middle income
- High income

**NATIONAL CAPACITY**

- **Low national capacity**
  - Insufficient fiscal resource
  - Low levels of functioning of the government and infrastructure

- **Medium national capacity**
  - Limited fiscal resources
  - Moderate/medium functioning of the government and infrastructure
  - Persisting equity concerns related to population groups

- **High national capacity**
  - Adequate fiscal resources
  - High levels of functioning of the government and infrastructure
  - May have persisting equity concerns related to population groups

**COUNTRY CONTEXT**

- Emergency
- Fragility
- Political stability
- Vulnerability to natural disasters

**Source:** UNICEF Child Protection Systems Strengthening, 2021. Adapted from the UNICEF’s Strategy for Health (2016-2030)
RECOMMENDED STEPS TO IDENTIFY AN OPTIMAL WORKFORCE RATIO

- Ensure **strategic leadership** and **ownership** of the mapping process
- Form or repurpose a **national leadership group**
- Agree on a **national definition** of the social service workforce
- Identify nationwide **information management systems**, databases and other information sources
RECOMMENDED STEPS TO IDENTIFY AN OPTIMAL WORKFORCE RATIO

- Identify the **current status** of the workforce and existing social service workforce to population ratio
  - Define size, scope, structure, qualification, functions, etc.
  - Use Social Service Workforce Mapping Toolkit or other mapping methodologies
  - Define full-time equivalent number of workers
  - Calculate current workforce to population ratio

- Identify **needs** of the population for services, using
  - Rights-based and needs-led approach
  - Community needs assessment instruments
  - Demographic, employment, school enrolment, institutionalization and other data

- Identify national social service **standards** and other regulations
  - Consider gaps between normative framework, envisaged scope of the system and actual needs for services
RECOMMENDED STEPS TO IDENTIFY AN OPTIMAL WORKFORCE RATIO

- Define the **target population** for calculating a ratio, per unit of:
  - General population
  - Child population
  - Children in alternative care, children living and working on the streets, people with disabilities, rural and urban populations, etc.

- Identify **functions** and **competencies** of the workforce required to meet service needs and standards

- Calculate a **minimum ratio** of workers to population or population groups
CALCULATING OPTIMAL RATIO OF WORKERS TO POPULATION GROUPS

- Apply an incremental approach

- Countries in earlier stages of social service workforce development: start by establishing one minimum ratio for the entire workforce

- Consider developing more specific ratio benchmarks for different elements of the workforce
BEST USE OF WORKFORCE RATIO ESTIMATES

- In combination with evidence on other aspects of workforce capacity and performance (e.g., skills and competencies, supervision, available services, geographic distribution, budget, etc.)

- Followed by costing of workforce needs

- Considering caseload and workload estimates