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SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE
ALLIANCE

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6th Annual Social Service Workforce Strengthening Symposium: Evidence to Action

May 7, 2019

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Introduction

The Global Social Service Workforce Alliance hosted the 6th Annual Social Service Workforce Strengthening Symposium on the topic of using evidence as a catalyst for advocacy efforts to support the social service workforce. Held on May 7, 2019, in Washington, DC, and via live webcast, a total of 313 individuals and 13 watch parties participated from 42 countries across NGOs, practice, government, academia, associations, foundations, UN agencies and other experts in the field. They heard speakers share experiences and lessons learned from recent

comprehensive social service workforce mappings and assessments in 32 countries. Representatives provided an overview of the mapping process, trends, recommendations and next steps for using this evidence toward developing workforce strengthening strategies.

Collecting and analyzing data to better understand the social service workforce is fundamental and foundational to creating informed advocacy. Speakers from donor groups, an association and an international NGO shared examples of using evidence and recommendations to advocate for and achieve greater support to better plan, develop and support the workforce. Speakers and breakout work sessions also made connections to global trends and progress toward achieving the recommendations within the Call to Action.

The Symposium included the launch of the State of the Social Service Workforce 2018 Report, which provides a comparative look at social service workforce development in four regions, and a Mapping Toolkit to support groups in workforce mapping.

The event was made possible through support from GHR Foundation, UNICEF and the Network for Social Work Management. Tides Center acts as fiscal host and sponsor of the Alliance.

Symposium Welcome

**Betsy Sherwood, Director, and Nicole Brown, Deputy Director,
Global Social Service Workforce Alliance**

Ms. Sherwood opened the event by thanking in-person and webcast attendees for their participation and thanking ongoing supporters of the Alliance, including GHR Foundation and UNICEF. She also shared that the Symposium marked the release of the 2018 State of the Social Service Workforce Report on trends and recommendations for strengthening this workforce as well as the process for gathering mapping and assessment data. The 2018 report also makes connections to the Alliance's Call to Action, which was released one year ago and continues to see traction and momentum, as evidenced by UNICEF's recently released Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Service Workforce for Child Protection. Speakers throughout the half-day Symposium will learn from the evidence-gathering process and how it can inform our next steps for workforce strengthening, she said. During panel two, three speakers will share their insights on what it takes to gain commitments and mobilize resources to support this important work.

“The social service workforce is the most important driver of change when trying to ensure access to quality services for children, families, and communities. Members of our workforce play critical roles in addressing the root causes of poverty, working to ensure all human rights are respected, social justice is possible, and positive change can occur.”

Ms. Sherwood concluded her remarks by thanking the many advocates who have become members of the Alliance in the six years since it was launched. As part of a global network, members have propelled progress in workforce strengthening.

Ms. Brown then provided background on the annual state of the social service workforce reports, which were begun four years ago to build on the minimally existing evidence base. Now that this evidence base is increasing, the Alliance is focusing its efforts on using this evidence to advocate to government and other key stakeholders for commitments to greater planning, development and support to this frontline workforce. She highlighted some of the ways that members can support these advocacy efforts, including through the advocacy interest group,

sharing tools and resources, participating in Social Service Workforce Week, and increasing the reach of the network to include more advocates. She invited all those joining the Symposium to become a member of the Alliance and further engage in global dialogue and actions toward ensuring a strong social service workforce.

Ms. Brown concluded by introducing Mr. Ted Chaiban, the keynote speaker, and thanking him personally and UNICEF globally for actions toward strengthening the social service workforce.

Keynote Address

Ted Chaiban, Director of Programmes, UNICEF Headquarters

Keynote remarks were delivered by Mr. Chaiban, who has held a number of national and regional positions during his 22 years with UNICEF, where he has witnessed, supported and worked alongside social service workers to deliver timely, efficient and effective programs to protect children, families and vulnerable groups.

Mr. Chaiban began by sharing his appreciation for the opportunity to contribute to ongoing conversations on how to further strengthen the social service workforce in all countries and regions to better protect all children from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. “We all know that social service workers... are the most important element of every well-functioning child protection system. Yet we also know that they are often under-resourced and under-supported. Their ability to perform and the impact of their work requires proper political, human and financial support.”

He highlighted several examples of how UNICEF is committed to strengthening the social service workforce, including a strategic priority specific toward social service workforce strengthening within UNICEF’s Strategic Plan for 2018-2021 and release of the new Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Service Workforce for Child Protection. The Guidelines aim to accelerate and support UNICEF regional and national efforts to plan, develop and support the social service workforce, including guidance on how to provide promotive, preventive and response services to vulnerable children and families.

“Investing in the social service workforce will yield high returns for children and families. On the other hand, lack of investment in the social service workforce will undermine all other efforts to strengthen the child protection system in a sustainable manner.”

UNICEF’s increased investment in this sector is already showing results. He shared that 132 countries across all regions invested in workforce strengthening in 2018, compared to 114 in 2017. He then gave examples of UNICEF’s work in countries to strengthen the workforce. In Burundi, the government has increased supervision of and support to community-based Child Protection Committees who are in direct contact with children and families. More than 17,000 members of these Committees have been trained and supported by government social workers through regular follow-up and trainings. Similarly, Vietnam, India, Mexico and Nigeria have all taken specific recent actions toward increasing capacity of the social service workforce.

Mr. Chaiban continued by sharing UNICEF’s experiences and history of collaboration with the Alliance to generate data, strategies and tools for greater planning, development and support to the social service workforce. He shared how recent mappings and analyses of the workforce in 32 countries is laying the groundwork for advocacy efforts and informing National Plans of Action. He stressed the importance of a participatory process, led by government, to define the

social service workforce, enact legislation and ensure appropriate training opportunities exist. Appropriate supervision and professional association supports are also needed for workers to be most effective. The new Guidelines from UNICEF as well as a Social Service Workforce Mapping Toolkit developed by the Alliance will further guide participatory, national level analysis of the social service workforce. He then called on all countries to undertake a mapping and analysis process to have the data needed to determine where gaps exist for developing strategies and plans for workforce strengthening. Global guidance on what could be the recommended ratio of social service workers to child population is also needed to advocate for greater investments in this sector, he said.

In conclusion, Mr. Chaiban shared that, “In 2019 and beyond, UNICEF looks forward to continuing its long-standing partnership with the Alliance, governments, civil society and partners across all regions to support ongoing efforts to strengthen the social service workforce. These efforts require strong national leadership and ownership.”

Panel 1: Building the Evidence Base to Support Social Service Workforce Development **Moderator: Kirsten Di Martino, Senior Adviser, Child Protection, UNICEF, and Global Social Service Workforce Alliance Steering Committee Member**

Ms. Di Martino introduced the first panel of the day that included several speakers in the room as well as video presentations from global participants. The panelists were invited to present upon lessons learned from recent mappings in different regions led by UNICEF and the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance. “We know how important these assessments have been in generating very valuable evidence to understand what the state of the social service workforce is in these countries, but also trying to give more visibility to this issue...and to create more leadership and ownership by government and civil society to drive these processes forward.” She then welcomed the speakers to give their presentations.

Speakers:

Dr. Natia Partskhaladze, Senior Technical Advisor, Global Social Service Workforce Alliance

Overview of the Mapping Process

Dr. Partskhaladze introduced the process and rationale for undertaking mappings and assessments within different countries and regions in order to increase the evidence base and generate new data and discourse on this topic. She shared the approach of the Alliance for advancing knowledge, including supporting member-led interest groups on topics of case management and advocacy to support members’ and stakeholders’ daily work in this field. The Call to Action released by the Alliance last year is an additional means for increasing advocacy efforts.

She shared additional details on the aim of the mapping toward facilitating deep reflection and understanding of the current status of the social service workforce. The information is important evidence for decision-makers but also many other groups to determine training, budgeting, professional standards and other workforce developments needed within the country. The type of information gathered as part of the mapping process includes: relevant policies and regulations; number of workers responsible for child protection per 100,000 children; levels of education,

“Without the knowledge of the current situation of the workforce, it’s close to impossible to properly plan, develop and support the workforce.”

training and field placements; and presence, role, size and effectiveness of associations. Workers' perceptions of challenges and opportunities, supervision and career paths were also assessed. UNICEF's Strategic Plan Output Indicators were highlighted as a means to measure workforce strengthening efforts.

In sharing steps of the mapping process, Dr. Partskhaladze shared the value of forming a national leadership group to lead both the mapping process but also implementation of next steps arising from recommendations. The methodology for the mapping process was contextualized and varied within each of the four regions. Key considerations for the mapping process include that it is a participatory process for stakeholder ownership and agreement on who comprises the social service workforce to determine which workers will be counted in the mapping.

She concluded by stressing that data collection is an ongoing process, which the Alliance and others are still learning from how to best replicate, contextualize and adapt in additional countries. Some of these learnings are being shared globally through toolkits the Alliance is now developing to support additional groups in undertaking this process.

Aaron Greenberg, Child Protection Regional Adviser, UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, Switzerland, and Global Social Service Workforce Alliance Steering Committee Member


Contextualizing the Approach and Involving Key Stakeholders in Europe and Central Asia

Sharing the contextual difference for the Europe and Central Asia region, Mr. Greenberg presented via video conference some of the reasons for needing to modify the approach specific to the region. Investment in social services in the region has some common threads, opportunities and challenges arising from reforms over the past 20 years that have resulted in adjustments to existing systems and strong justice systems. "Those reforms have led to a growth in social services, alternative care services and the demand for professionals including social workers, foster care givers and youth workers...based on that history we made an effort to further understand this area and co-create a framework for governments for measuring, advancing and identifying bottlenecks in the social service workforce in the region."

Findings from the mapping show that there are many people performing social work duties without the adequate social work competencies, training and degree. Other challenges identified include: a lack of data, lack of agreement on the definition of social work and the social service workforce, low pay, low levels of trust, weak supervision, high caseloads and a case management approach rather than preventative and promotive services. To respond to these challenges, a regional call to action and monitoring framework was developed to ensure that competencies, functions and qualifications are aligned across the social service workforce and only qualified professionals are in roles requiring professional competencies. He then shared

Strengthening Core Competencies Across Social Service and Allied Workforces

- It is not just about **education and practice** – although mapping shows they need strengthening
- Is about the **architecture of the system around the workforce** – at all levels – individual job descriptions, incentives, monitoring, management and regulation, policy environment
- UNICEF ECARO is currently mapping the situation and identifying options to address constraints to using these competencies in the workplace for social service and allied workforces in social protection

 Social Service Workforce Strengthening in Europe and Central Asia – UNICEF | for every child

the six categories for monitoring toward determining and defining competencies and related roles.

Mr. Greenberg shared some specific examples of how countries in the region are taking forward the call to action. A regional initiative to improve interpersonal skills and community outreach among social workers and the social service workforce has emerged. A partnership between academics and practitioner networks is being developed and tested in Georgia and Kazakhstan. In Serbia, the government is calling for a Western Balkans high-level meeting to exchange experiences and identify sub-regional partnership opportunities. And in Georgia, plans are underway to create new placements for social workers supported by a state certified non-degree program under the new Law on Social Work, passed in 2018.

He concluded by sharing additional resources available to learn more about the mapping process and next steps that are emerging within the region.

George Abadjian, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF Tunisia; and Sophea Phok, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF Cambodia
Learnings from Mappings

Sharing lessons learned in Tunisia during the mapping process, Mr. Abadjian stated that all of the discussions and lively debates contributed to reaching agreement on the definition and composition of the social service workforce. The process was an opportunity for UNICEF to mobilize joint child protection and social protection efforts, and key partners at national, regional and community level. He confirmed that the Tunisian government has welcomed this study and sees it as a roadmap to strengthen the social service workforce within the country. He shared that the study is timely as it relates to UNICEF's current focus to strengthen both social service and social protection programs to best serve the needs of the most vulnerable children. UNICEF intends to advocate to relevant ministries in line with the study's recommendations to strengthen the capacity and working conditions of the social service workforce, which is already included within the joint bi-annual action plan of the government and UNICEF. He concluded by sharing that some of the findings are already influencing curriculum for social workers, a training of trainers program, and a coaching mechanism for career development.

The mapping in Cambodia represents the first time such comprehensive data collection related to the social service has been undertaken in the country. Mr. Phok shared that the social service workforce is very diverse within Cambodia, reflected by the 46 different tiles used locally. The findings also show that those currently working within the social service workforce are lacking some of the needed training and competencies to perform all of the functions of the position. He shared that there currently isn't a law or policy specific to social work. Through formation of a national leadership group, key stakeholders were brought together to discuss the social service workforce. These discussions are leading to specific actions toward advancing workforce strengthening.

“The findings from this initiative will be used to further plan, develop and support the social service workforce within Cambodia. New knowledge from this mapping will be included within the business case on social work...to advocate for increased government investment in social work, used to inform the capacity development plan to build the capacity of social workers by 2020 and will serve as a national baseline for planning and programming related to the social service workforce and contributing to achieving the SDG targets to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against children.”



Alex Collins, Lead Author, State of the Social Service Workforce Report 2018, and Technical Program Manager, IntraHealth International
Key Findings, Trends & Recommendations from Mappings and Assessments

Presenting on the key findings, trends and recommendations from the four regional mappings and assessments, Ms. Collins shared the aim of the 2018 report that as more and better data becomes available, country-level workforce mapping efforts would spread. Additionally, it remains the hope that national governments will invest in systems to manage human resources data and license and register social service workers as appropriate, and donors will propel measurement of progress against common workforce strengthening indicators. The report pulls data from 36 countries to provide a multi-regional picture of the social service workforce.

Defining the workforce within the country has a significant influence on determining the size of the workforce. The ratio of workers to child population helps to indicate if there are enough human resources in place to ensure workers are not only available but responsive. Having an adequate number of workers in place also increases the likelihood of reasonable caseloads, retention and ability to provide quality services. Differences in definition of workers and population sizes do not allow for cross-country data comparisons, however comparing these ratios within a single country longitudinally can help track progress in recruitment and retention

Ms. Collins also presented upon the different government ministries employing social service workers and the spread of recruitment, hiring and retention impacting the availability and accessibility of data. She also shared that gender make-up of the workforce is largely female, and that this reality could signal other related challenges to professionalization such as opportunities for upward mobility, accessing training and professional recognition.

“As an employer of predominantly women, there is great potential for the social service sector to contribute to SDG 5 and achieving gender equality. There is similar connection to women in the workforce and the opportunity it presents for economic growth.”

Worker surveys provided data on the perceived need for additional training, training options available and supervision and its effectiveness. Supervision is expected to go beyond administrative functions but also support professional development. She also shared the key role of professional associations in supporting workers and development of a code of ethics. Findings show that most countries have policies or legislation referring to the workforce or a specific cadre, but few specifically define the workforce and its role in caring for populations facing difficult circumstances.

In conclusion, Ms. Collins presented cross-cutting recommendations and recommendations specific to planning, development and support to the social service workforce, which are further spelled out in the 2018 report. There is a need for data to be available from all government ministries and NGOs related to all social service workers. A holistic approach and field education can enrich education and training. Legal recognition for professional associations can empower them in representing the workforce and lead to standard setting and monitoring, such as registration and licensing for workers.

The panelists then responded to a number of questions from Symposium attendees in the room as well as online related to the mapping process, findings and next steps. They shared that this process has generated great momentum in these countries for seeking greater government and stakeholder support for training, policies, funding and overall recognition of this workforce. Ms.

Di Martino concluded the panel by summarizing and stressing important overarching outcomes. This process has been one of realization and learning that needs to involve all stakeholders, and consensus on the definition and composition of the workforce is a necessary first step. These discussions are influencing the work of the Alliance to refine the global definition of the social service workforce. Contextualization throughout the process is also key, as there is no one model that fits all regions.

Panel 2: Advocating for Resource Allocation: The role of professional associations, non governmental organizations, donor groups and other stakeholders

Moderator: John Williamson, Senior Technical Advisor, Displaced Children and Orphans Fund, USAID

Mr. John Williamson introduced the panelists and moderated a question and answer format for learning from the speakers on how they have advocated for the social service workforce within their organizations and specific roles. He invited each panelist to share specifics on engaging stakeholders within the contexts where they work.

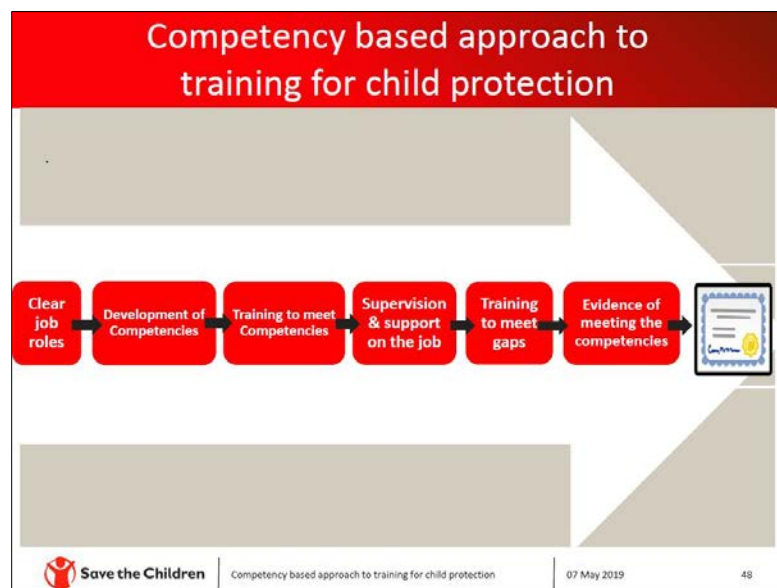
Speakers:

Jane Calder, Senior Child Protection Advisor, Save the Children UK, Asia region, and Global Social Service Workforce Alliance Steering Committee Member

Ms. Calder provided an overview of recent ways that Save the Children as an organization has advocated for the social service workforce. Child protection systems strengthening is one of the identified four key priority areas of the organization’s child protection strategy through 2030. “We recognize the importance of a skilled and competent social service workforce being at the core of any child protection system and advocate for sufficient planning of the workforce, development of skills and capacity, and ongoing support for the social service workforce.”

Save the Children is also in the process of developing guidance for Country Offices on strengthening the child protection system. This guidance uses experiences to date in advocating for a skilled and competent workforce, budgeting for appropriate positions within the workforce, and building capacity.

Ms. Calder shared examples of partnerships with government, NGOs and others to increase effectiveness and impact. For example, Save the Children India is strengthening the workforce within the Integrated Child Protection Scheme – the national system for the protection of the millions of children within two states in India, West Bengal and Jharkhand. To strengthen the capacity of those working within four different positions within the District Child Protection Units, Save the Children India has



developed clear job descriptions, competencies and training aligned to these competencies, a system for assessing competencies, and aims for accreditation and recognition for staff in those positions. She stated that the organization is learning from this approach in India and considering replicating the approach elsewhere, while being sensitive to different contexts in other countries.

Finally, she shared how she is personally advocating for the workforce as co-lead of the Child Protection Task Group on Systems Strengthening globally and as a Steering Committee member of the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance. She regularly disseminates information from the Alliance on resources, webinars and other learning and knowledge exchange opportunities such as working groups on case management, on Save the Children’s organizational Facebook page and internal communications systems.

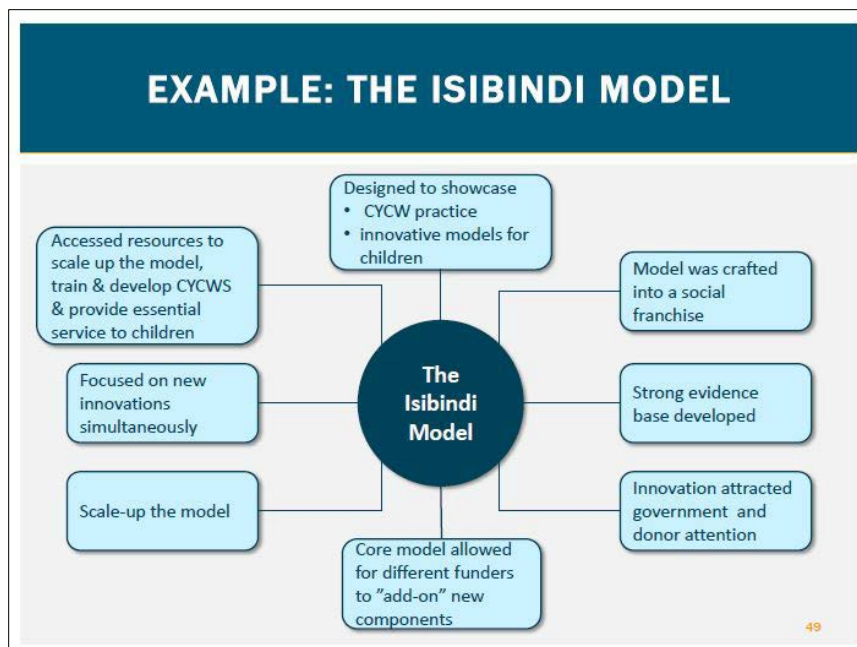
Zeni Thumbadoo, Deputy Director, National Association of Child Care Workers (NACCW), South Africa, and Global Social Service Workforce Alliance Steering Committee Member

Ms. Thumbadoo shared the experience of NACCW in accessing resources for planning, developing and supporting the child and youth care workforce (CYCW). NACCW is both an association and registered non-profit organization, able to raise funds, with a focus on building a national network of CYCWs that is localized at grassroots level to feed into a national organizational structure. This allows for the realities of children and workers and service delivery challenges to be filtered up to advocacy levels.

She shared how strengthening of the CYC workforce is resulting in quality, innovative services for children and youth in the context of their families and community. NACCW has created a demand for training of CYCWs. This demand began within the field with CYCWs and their employers wanting training, followed by donors requiring training to ensure returns on investment. This led to a national advocacy initiative requiring training of CYCWs to ensure the integrity of professional practice contextualized in the realities of children’s needs.

NACCW designed a model for cost-effective community social services through the Isibindi program. With funding from the South African government and supportive funding from USAID, the program hired and trained 7,000 child and youth care workers within their communities. By living in the communities where they work, they know the local needs and have gained the trust of their community members.

The Isibindi model was crafted into a social franchise, allowing for rapid replication along minimum standards. As an evidence base showing success of the program developed, opportunities arose to influence policy makers to



support the model and its scale up as well as attracting government and donor attention. The core model allowed for different donors to ‘add-on’ new components. Smaller donors were able to fund discrete additional elements that were identifiable and ‘owned’ by donors. This also allowed for new innovations.

Ghazal Keshavarzian, Director, Elevate Children Funders Group

Ms. Keshavarzian shared some background on the purpose and approach of the Elevate Children Funders Group. Comprised of 22 foundations, the Funders Group is a network committed to advancing philanthropy that supports children and youth facing adversity. Established in 2011, the Group was initially the Child Protection Funders Group but has since broadened its focus on the full lifespan of children and youth affected by adversity, from birth to adolescence, with a focus on children facing the threats of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. The goal of the funders group is to increase collaboration and efficacy as well as help determine gaps where funding is needed to make an impact.

She offered ideas to Symposium participants on how to better communicate the role and importance of support for the social service workforce by tailoring the message to fit the audience. As every donor approaches these issues differently, different messages and tactics are needed for the different audiences. For those funders who are supporting this type of work, she challenged the attendees to think about how to use them as spokespersons. It is also important to frame the discussion in terms of how the workforce improves child well-being and healthy development, as well as show the local, grassroots efforts underway rather than only top-down approach. She stressed the need to use a mix of data, evidence, promising practices and storytelling to attract attention, understanding and ultimately donors to any cause. She said that the Funders Group regularly polls the foundation members on issues that are of importance, and the social service workforce has not been identified as an area of interest across the membership.

“Using research and evidence to tell stories is important for being better at communicating...how this all fits in around issues of child well-being and healthy development.”

She concluded by encouraging members of the social service workforce to think about terminology that resonates to show these are the people on the ground, doing the work, and by supporting them funders are supporting children and families.

Breakout Activity – Developing Key Messages for Stakeholders on the Importance of Supporting the Social Service Workforce

Group Facilitators: Nicole Brown, Deputy Director, Global Social Service Workforce Alliance; Sarah Johnson, Knowledge and Communications Specialist, Better Care Network; Aniruddha Kulkarni, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF Headquarters; Sarah Neville, Co-Chair Advocacy Interest Group, Global Social Service Workforce Alliance; Susan Rubin, Assistant director, National Association of Social Workers Foundation (US); and Alexandra Tucci Thomas, Senior Communications Officer, Together for Girls

For the final session of the Symposium, participants broke into three groups to develop key messages tailored to specific audiences, including UN agencies, governments and donor

groups; media and the general public; and members of the social service workforce. Communications and social service professionals facilitated group discussions on key words, phrases and sentences, toward a goal of developing 2-4 key messages targeted to each audience. Online participants were also invited to contribute to the groups through entering statements online. Some of the drafted messages and conversations were then shared with the entire room following the activity, and the Advocacy Interest Group will next lead efforts to refine and validate these messages, which will soon be shared for wider use in support of members' advocacy efforts.

Closing Remarks

Dr. Rebecca Davis, Associate Professor for Professional Practice and Director of the Center for Global Social Work, School of Social Work, Rutgers University, United States, and Chairperson, Global Social Service Workforce Alliance Steering Committee

Dr. Davis concluded the Symposium by thanking all speakers and attendees for their engagement in discussions toward strengthening the social service workforce. She shared that the global agenda of building capacity of the social service workforce by addressing system needs through a workforce lens has been building for only 10 years, so it's still a relatively new area. She highlighted some of the many accomplishments in the areas of planning, developing and supporting the workforce through top-down and bottom-up approaches simultaneously at global and local levels.



Evidence is key to influencing decision-making about social services at policy and practice levels and for increasing investments in human and financial resources. Moving data to results requires advocacy and influence.”



Stressing the importance of continuing to increase our understanding of promising practices, communications through words, stories and frameworks are needed to capture attention of donors, government structures and other decision-makers. Telling stories is one of the ways the social service workforce can reframe data into messages that are understood by different audiences. She suggested that the workforce should not only align messages with donor priorities but influence these priorities.

Dr. Davis concluded the Symposium by issuing a challenge to all participants and workforce advocates to devise messages and metaphors that are relatable and understandable across many audiences to increase attention and funding.