



Concept Note

World Social Work Day – 21st March 2023 - Bangladesh

The Launch of the 2nd National Campaign for the Promotion of Social Work 2023

Background:

Bangladesh has made tremendous progress in infrastructural development, digitalisation, poverty reduction, and gender-based equity in the last decades. Despite this, Bangladesh's number of children affected by violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect remains significant. More than **45 million children below 14** experience violence in their homes¹. High levels of gender-based violence (GBV), child marriage, and child labour persist. More than 20 children die every week from extreme forms of violence and abuse².

To respond to these issues, the country needs a strong child protection system. One of the critical elements of an effective child protection system is a strong social-service workforce with a clear mandate. A well-planned, trained, and supported **social service workforce plays an important role in identifying, preventing, and managing risks, and responding to situations of vulnerability and harm**. The Government of Bangladesh has officially recognised the role of social workers in protecting the rights of children at the community level and imposed proactive social work as the core of protection work for children under the Department of Social Services (DSS) through the enactment of the Children Act 2013.

However, the limited number of professional social workers and caseworkers, para-social workers, and other skilled social service workforce across the country (the current Government workforce is just over **3000**, but **there is a need for over 110,000 social workers** and para-social workers) leaves women and children exposed to violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect and with limited access to protection services.

The DSS has been implementing “Child Sensitive Social Protection in Bangladesh (CSPB)” project II to strengthen **the social service workforce** to deliver child protection services to children in need of protection. There have been social work promotion campaigns and various advocacy initiatives implemented by the DSS and the Ministry of Social Welfare to increase the number of Social Workers and increase the prestige of social workers.

To continue this momentum the EU and UNICEF will support the DSS and the Ministry of Social Welfare in planning and executing **the 2nd National Campaign for Promotion of Social Work** along with the celebration of **World Social Work Day on 21st March**. Subsequent events across the country, from national to divisional and community levels, will be organised as part of the campaign.

This initiative will be supported under a joint project named “Fostering rights and empowerment among most marginalised adolescents and children with disabilities in Bangladesh” by the European Union and UNICEF.

¹ MICS, 2019 – 89% of children under the age of 14 experience physical and emotional violence monthly at home.

² UNICEF BCO Snapshot December 2020 – analysis of media reports across 2020.



Rationale and Objectives

Social Work is lifesaving. Social Workers work closely with vulnerable people mainly women and children in need of protection. Social Workers help to establish social justice and equity. They give voice to the underprivileged and support reducing vulnerability to violence and abuse. They support their clients to have a better chance of becoming equipped to survive. As mentioned above, **Bangladesh has just over 3000 social workers all over the country for millions of women and children in need of protection.** The country needs more social workers and para-social workers down to the Ward and Village level. As of today, approximately **95% of current Social Service Officers/Social Workers still need to have a social work academic background.** There is no University in Bangladesh preparing or offering tertiary-level courses in Child Protection Social Work, though the capacity and ability for this exist.

The objective is to launch a campaign for awareness-raising and promotion of the prestige of Child Protection Social Workers, to develop a highly functioning, credible, and sustainable quality workforce, national-level Diploma and Masters programme on child protection that are informed by local context and knowledge are essential.

The programme will deliver **professional-level technical competencies** about child protection social casework through theoretical course work and, ideally some form of an experiential field-based practicum where students can apply and test these concepts in a real-life context.

It is expected to achieve the following **outcomes** as a result of **the National Campaign**:

- Deeper understanding of social work as a life-saving role to protect children and families.
- Increased commitment of the GoB to strengthen the social service workforce as a key element of a strong child protection system.
- Increased number of efficient social services for vulnerable children and their families.
- Commitment to establishing social work qualification framework and registration mechanisms.

Social Work Promotion campaign plan:

The 2nd National Campaign for Promotion of Social Work will consist of subsequent events at the national and sub-national levels across the country to achieve the objectives mentioned above. The National Campaign will be launched with the celebration of **World Social Work Day** on 21st March at the national level and in 8 Divisions simultaneously. **Every year World Social Work Day** is celebrated across the globe on the third Tuesday of March to create greater awareness of Social Work. This year, Bangladesh, like in other countries, will observe World Social Work Day for the third time in the country. On this day, social work organisations throughout the world mark World Social Work Day by bringing messages to their governments, communities, and peer professional groups on the unique and significant contributions of the Social Work profession.

For these purposes, the **DSS under the MoSW** are going to organise a national-level conference and will launch social work campaign to be implemented around the year to promote social work in the country. As part of that,



UNICEF will support the DSS in developing the following multimedia content, which will be broadcasted/ disseminated year-round at national and sub-national levels events:

- **Short documentary film** with the real stories of social workers and the positive impact of their work on the lives of vulnerable children and their families.
- At least one '**Public Service Announcement (PSAs)**' for television, radio and social media.
- Banners, festoon, posters and social media messages.

Divisional Conference:

To observe World Social Work Day at the sub-national level, there will be **Divisional Conferences** organised in collaboration with the Divisional Offices of the DSS. These conferences will bring social workers and engage them in policy-level discussion to improve the social service workforce and child protection mechanisms in the divisions and in the country.

Roundtable Discussion:

Another major event at the national level in the frame of the 2nd National Campaign will be a **Roundtable** with key Government stakeholders, Universities, CBO/NGOs, UN agencies, and other interested organisations in June/July 2023.

The objective of the **Roundtable** is to raise and discuss issues on the deployment of an adequate number of social workers, strengthening community-based mechanisms for the protection of women and children, and ensuring access to child protection services for the most vulnerable children and their families in urban and rural contexts. Thus, it is expected to increase the understanding of the value of social work and commitment from policymakers and policy executing authorities to invest more resources to **achieve the following targets:**

- Consider Social Work as critical and lifesaving for protecting women and children from violence and abuse.
- Establish Social Service Workforce accreditation mechanism.
- Establish Social Work Post-Qualification Frame.
- Designate and invest in Child Protection Social Workers.
- Strengthen community-based mechanisms to prevent child protection concerns and harmful practices.

Community Dialogue:

Across the year, there will be organised **Community Dialogues** in collaboration with the Upazilla Social Service Offices and the Urban Community Development Offices of the DSS all over the country. The Community Dialogues will bring together social workers and community people to raise awareness about social workers and their role in developing communities. The participants will discuss the prevention of violence and abuse of children and women, improving the early identification of children and families in difficult life situations and the role of community members in this.



Timeline for the 2nd National Campaign for Promotion of Social Work 2023:

#	Activity	Timeline	Responsible authority
1	Developing multimedia communication campaign package for promoting Social Work	February - March 2023	DSS, UNICEF, event-management agency
2	World Social Work Day Celebration and National level Workshop/Conference	21 st March 2023	DSS, UNICEF
3	8 Divisional Conferences	TBD	DSS, UNICEF
4	Roundtable in Dhaka	June or July 2023	DSS, UNICEF
5	5000 union-level Community Dialogues	August 2023	DSS, UNICEF

Social Media Messages:

1. Social workers play a vital role in alleviating social injustice and vulnerabilities by engaging the community and equipping clients to survive.
Hashtag: #CommunityAction #SocialWorkers #Essential #ProtectChildren
2. Social service workers are front liners in protecting women and children from violence, abuse, and neglect.
Hashtag: #ChildProtection #ChildAbuseNeglect #MHPSS #Services
3. Social service workers carry out outreach work, identify vulnerable households, link them to services, and alleviate vulnerabilities to survive.
Hashtag: #OutreachSocialWork #ReferralServices #CaseManagement
4. Social Service Workforce mechanism needs more attention to increase the number, to equip and to establish accreditation.
Hashtag: #WSWD2023 #IncreaseSocialServiceWorkforce #IncreaseProtection
5. Investing in Social Service Workers is the first step to Child Protection.
Hashtag: #Socialworkers #FirstStepstoProtection

