Save the Children

REFLECTIVE GUIDANCE
ON THE STRENGTHENING OF THE COMMUNITY-LEVEL SOCIAL WELFARE WORKFORCE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In 2025, Save the Children conducted a study on the current state of the Community-Level Social Welfare Workforce. The findings highlight the crucial roles the workforce plays on the ground — roles that are often overlooked or underestimated. In response, this guidance was developed to support Country Offices in crafting and implementing contextually appropriate strategies to strengthen the Community-Level Social Welfare Workforce, taking the Child Protection Systems Strengthening lens.

The humanitarian and development sector has pledged to promote localization and shift power to local actors, yet progress remains slow, often leading to programmes misaligned with community realities. Genuine localisation means enhancing existing community strengths and ownership. Strengthening the Community-Level Social Welfare Workforce is central to this agenda— recognising communities' role in child protection within broader systems. Efforts should enhance, not replace, local capacity, grounded in context and culturally embedded practices. This requires thorough reflection and strategies shaped by community realities, not imposed solutions.

We hope this guidance encourages Country Office colleagues, in collaboration with counterparts and other organizations, to thoroughly reflect on current practices and use these insights to strengthen their work.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This guidance supports Save the Children Country Offices (COs) in strengthening the Community-Level Social Welfare Workforce (CLSWW) through a reflective, collaborative, and Child Protection Systems Strengthening (CPSS) approach. The CLSWW—comprising volunteers and paraprofessionals—plays a vital role in preventing and responding to child protection risks at the community level. However, their contributions are often under-recognized, under-supported, and insufficiently integrated into formal child protection systems. This guidance is intended for CO colleagues who are already engaged in strengthening the CLSWW as part of broader system strengthening programming or who are developing and implementing new or existing projects that include this area of work.

The guidance **outlines a practical assessment and strategy development process,** enabling COs—together with government counterparts and other child protection organizations—to identify strengths, gaps, and priorities. These steps include:
  1) Prepare for the assessment;
  2) Understand the current state (Essential);
  3) Collect primary data (Optional);
  4) Reflect on quality of CLSWW strengthening work; and
  5) Identify and prioritize actions for improvement.
It promotes inclusive planning, leadership by duty-bearers, and inter-agency collaboration to ensure the CLSWW is sustainably supported and contributes effectively and ethically to child protection systems, and most importantly, to children, families, and community members across all contexts.

Drawing on lessons from nine countries, the guidance highlights key gaps in legal frameworks, role clarity, competencies, supervision, and sustainability. It also provides practical recommendations to define CLSWW roles in alignment with community needs and existing practices, and to link these roles to realistic, context-specific competencies. Strengthening the CLSWW requires coordinated efforts to develop systematic and structured capacity-building programs, provide ongoing technical supervision, and advocate for formal recognition through laws, policies, and accreditation mechanisms. Ultimately, this guidance seeks to elevate the CLSWW as a central pillar of localized child protection, ensuring children are safer and better supported in their communities.

INTRODUCTION TO THE REFLECTIVE GUIDANCE

Purpose of the guidance

The aim of this guidance is to **enable Save the Children COs, their government counterparts, and other child protection organizations to undertake a reflection as a key first step in efforts to strengthen the CLSWW in their country. This will, in turn, support them to craft contextually appropriate strategies for building on existing resources and structures, and strengthening the CLSWW in an impactful and sustainable manner.** In this guidance, reflection refers to the process of standing back to understand the progress made and the challenges faced in strengthening the CLSWW. It involves reviewing the achievements to date, discussing obstacles encountered, and identifying areas for improvement to guide future actions. This guidance can be used by **CO staff members who are already working on the strengthening of the CLSWW for reflection and quality assurance of their existing projects**, as well as by **COs that are newly initiating project work in this area**.

Applying a CPSS Lens to CLSWW Strengthening

Save the Children defines an effective and high performing child protection system as *a collection of interlinking components at different levels in society – such as the community, district, and national levels – that are organised around the common goal of preventing, mitigating and responding to abuse neglect, exploitation and violence affecting children*[1].

The image below illustrates the interconnected components of a child protection system. Strengthening the CLSWW is central to broader efforts to enhance the social services workforce, which directly links to all other system components. At the community level, CLSWW provides essential support, influences household and community practices, and should be guided by ethical data collection to ensure contextually appropriate service delivery. Clearly defining their roles within the legal framework and reflecting their importance in national strategies is critical, alongside adequate financial support and integration into coordination mechanisms. This CPSS approach aligns with the structure of this guidance, including the assessment questions and strategies to enhance the CLSWW. CO colleagues can also refer to the Inter-Agency Framework for Action on CPSS to strengthen the CLSWW in collaboration with other child protection actors.

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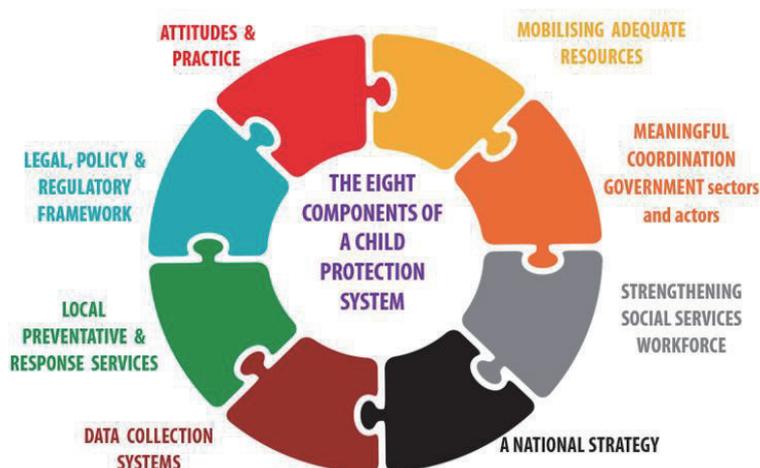
[1] *Strengthening Child Protection Systems: Guidance for country offices* (Save the Children, 2019)

Linkages between localization and CLSWW Strengthening

Since the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and the subsequent launch of the Grand Bargain[2], there has been a strong push to shift power to local actors through the localisation and Accountability to Affected People (AAP) agendas. These agendas aim to place communities at the centre and address the power imbalances that persist across the sector. However, despite the rhetoric, progress has been slow. Many organisations struggle to genuinely share power—whether due to a lack of will, knowledge, or skills—which can lead to programming that fails to reflect the lived realities of children and communities. This underscores the need for a genuine commitment to localisation—one that builds on existing community strengths and leadership.

Strengthening the CLSWW falls within the scope of the localisation agenda. However, this is only meaningful when we recognise the vital role communities already play in protecting children through culturally embedded practices and when we enable workforce ownership. Rather than applying a cookie-cutter approach that replaces existing community capacity and efforts, or simply instructing the workforce on what to do, efforts to strengthen the CLSWW should start by understanding the local context and designing strategies that enhance it. This requires honest and humble reflection on our part as Save the Children. Therefore, this guidance aims to support COs in analysing how the CLSWW functions at the community level and in developing strategies from that foundation—rather than imposing predetermined actions or instructions. It is also important for the CLSWW to listen to and learn from the wider community, including children, and to contextualize their work. The document therefore outlines practical actions to help the CLSWW support community members in fostering leadership for preventing and responding to child protection issues. Please see SENSITIVITY TO COMMUNITY NORMS AND POWER DYNAMICS for some practical tips (Page 31).

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[2] The 'Grand Bargain' is an agreement between more than 50 of the biggest donors and aid providers worldwide. It aims to get more aid into the hands of people in need. It is essentially a 'Grand Bargain on efficiency' between donors and humanitarian agencies to reduce the costs and improve the effectiveness of humanitarian action. Localisation is part of the agreement to reform the delivery of humanitarian aid. Humanitarian agencies have committed to making aid "as local as possible, as international as necessary." This means strengthening, rather than substituting, existing national and local capacities, supporting local leadership, and stepping in directly only when invited or when additional support is truly needed. Where gaps exist, international agencies should offer targeted assistance and share technical expertise to enhance, not overshadow, local responses.

SECTION 1 - DEFINING THE 'COMMUNITY-LEVEL SOCIAL WELFARE WORKFORCE'

Definition

For the purposes of this guidance, a generic definition of the CLSWW is provided (see the box below). If an official or widely accepted definition does not exist in your context, this definition should be reviewed as part of the CLSWW assessment and adapted to the country context.

> *"The Community Level Social Welfare Workforce, despite its diversity of roles, functions, institutional settings, and job titles, shares a common fundamental purpose - to work with communities, including children themselves, to support them in keeping their children safe and protected. As volunteers, paraprofessionals, and professionals they deliver this support according to their different levels of training, experience, community needs and expectations, and defined responsibilities (as a full-time worker or as part of the broader roles of the workforce). The preventative, responsive, and promotive support and services to families and children in their communities are informed by the context, and could include understanding their individual and collective needs, facilitating access to appropriate support and services, reducing discrimination, promoting social justice, and preventing and responding to violence, abuse, exploitation, neglect, and family separation."*

Clarifying Who Is and Isn't Part of the CLSWW

The CLSWW includes individuals who contribute to child protection at the community level and liaise with actors in the broader child protection system, often serving in volunteer or paraprofessional roles. Their titles, functions, and activities vary across contexts, but they share a common focus on child protection. Who may be considered as part of the CLSWW include:

- Community-level child protection volunteers
- Paraprofessionals supporting child protection activities such as *Para-social Workers* in Uganda
- Child protection focal points within community groups or committees, such as those in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Mali
- Community-level actors supporting family-based care at the community level such as *Community Mothers* in Colombia
- Community-level facilitators of child protection and MHPSS (community-level and non-specialized) group activities at safe spaces
- Child protection focal points within health clinics or school management committees
- Other trained community members who regularly engage in child protection efforts

These individuals are not ordinary community or sectoral service providers (e.g., health workers or teachers), although such professionals can be trained on basic child protection to strengthen linkages with the CLSWW. Who is not considered as part of the CLSWW may be:

- General community leaders or members without a child protection role
- Health workers, educators, legal aid actors, or other service providers whose primary role is outside child protection

This guidance focuses specifically on non-professional, community-level actors. While professional social workers or caseworkers are essential to a holistic child protection system, they are not included in the scope of this document.

In this guidance, individuals under the age of 18 are not considered part of the CLSWW. However, the importance of supporting children's meaningful participation in community-level child protection is fully recognized and acknowledged as one of the key roles of the CLSWW.

Table 1: Examples of the CLSWW and Non-CLSWW

Included in the CLSWW	Not Included in the CLSWW
Community child protection volunteers	General community members and children
Paraprofessionals implementing child protection preventative and response activities	Community or religious leaders without child protection roles
Child protection focal points in community committees, groups or service providers	Health workers, teachers and other service providers (unless trained and engaged in child protection)
Community-level facilitators of child protection / MHPSS group activities	
Trained community individuals supporting family-based care in their community	Professional social workers or caseworkers

Defining and Strengthening the CLSWW in a Contextually Appropriate Manner

Any in-country definition of the CLSWW should reflect existing community-level practices and be informed by assessments (see Section 3) that identify current roles, gaps, and priorities.

Efforts to define and strengthen the CLSWW should balance formalization—through defined roles, reporting lines, and legislation—with respect for the informal, voluntary, and adaptive nature of their community-level roles. Supporting the government leadership wherever possible is essential to ensure scalability, sustainability, and integration into national systems. Also, flexibility and responsiveness to local practices remain critical, as highlighted in the sub-section on *Linkages between localization and CLSWW Strengthening* (Page 6).

In humanitarian settings, particularly in conflict-affected areas, it may be more appropriate to engage duty bearers within non-state actors who may play vital roles in service delivery and protection. Coordination among organizations, including through a Child Protection coordination body such as the Protection Cluster (where SC often leads or actively engages), a Case Management Taskforce or Community-Level Child Protection Taskforce, is key to ensuring consistency and scalability, while adapting to evolving contexts and respecting local practices.

While countries should work toward a common understanding of CLSWW roles under government leadership, COs can also strengthen the CLSWW in their own right, contributing to broader workforce development in contextually appropriate ways.

SECTION 2 - KEY ISSUES IN STRENGTHENING THE COMMUNITY-LEVEL SOCIAL WELFARE WORKFORCE

This section looks at some of the key issues in strengthening the CLSWW as identified and documented in the synthesis report. The framework for reflection introduced in Section 3 was designed based on these learning points.

Legal frameworks

All countries studied have ratified major international conventions on children's rights and adopted child protection laws or policies. However, legal frameworks defining the roles of the CLSWW are weak or absent. This gap often stems from low prioritization of child protection, limited resources, and lack of workforce organization. Where governance provisions exist, they are usually linked to national or international legislation or draft internal policies. Even in countries with legal frameworks, implementation is challenging due to unclear roles, limited support, and budget constraints. Greater clarity on the CLSWW roles is needed to strengthen collaboration among governments and civil society. Recognition within government policies gives the CLSWW legitimacy, but professionalization requires integration into legal frameworks to ensure visibility, authority, resources, and sustainable funding.

A Diversity of Roles but a Common Purpose

The CLSWW performs varied roles across contexts, shaped by local challenges, cultural norms, and limited resources. This underscores the importance of local processes and perspectives. Their work often extends beyond child protection to broader child rights and support for other vulnerable groups. Despite this diversity, the CLSWW shares a common purpose: working with community members including children, to keep children safe and protected. They serve as a link between the community and the wider child protection system.

Sharing such a common understanding of its purpose could be used to guide joint work by the government and key actors to strengthen the CLSWW in-country in alignment with those existing norms and traditional mechanisms that promote children's best interests.

Eligibility/Selection Criteria

Most countries lack clear eligibility criteria for joining the CLSWW. In contrast, some have better-defined criteria for those supervising the CLSWW within the formal child protection system. A few countries apply informal criteria, such as community membership, minimum education levels, or training certification. Where criteria are clearly defined, they help establish minimum benchmarks and ensure the CLSWW are identifiable and equipped to address specific child protection issues. Eligibility criteria should remain flexible and adaptable to local needs and contexts.

Job Descriptions

Some countries do not provide the CLSWW with formal job descriptions or written guidelines. In contexts where volunteer workers operate as part of a committee rather than individually, they are typically informed of their tasks during initial formation or training. For example, Burkina Faso has a job description for the community-level child protection committee, but it outlines general tasks without specifying individual roles.

Vague job descriptions can hinder coordination with the formal social work system, limit advocacy for budgetary support, and risk overwhelming the CLSWW by stretching them beyond their capacities. Clear yet flexible job descriptions—aligned with role expectations, cultural context,

and community dynamics—are essential to guide CLSWW's work, minimize harm, and ensure documents are accessible and understandable to them.

Competencies

There are significant variations in how countries establish competencies for the CLSWW. Mali stands out with its comprehensive Competency Development Framework, categorizing competencies into Knowledge, Aptitudes, and Attitudes, and linking them directly to roles and responsibilities. Other countries—such as Tanzania, Cambodia, India, and Myanmar—also highlight key competencies, including knowledge of legal frameworks, theories, and practices, as well as skills in engagement, assessment, planning, communication, and advocacy. However, these competencies are not always explicitly tied to the specific roles assigned to the CLSWW. Some countries lack competency frameworks altogether.

A long list of competencies may be unrealistic for the CLSWW, who often have different skills, motivation, and experience compared to formal social workers. Each country should develop a realistic, role-specific and contextually appropriate set of core competencies, co-designed and regularly updated with the CLSWW themselves, to support their learning and ensure relevance.

Capacity Development, Supervision, and Accreditation

Capacity development for the CLSWW is generally provided by governments and/or I/NGOs. I/NGOs play a key role in delivering training, often tailored to specific project outcomes. While this contributes to building a pool of qualified workers and strengthens the overall system, such efforts should ideally be systematic and coordinated between governments and key actors.

The CLSWW often lacks supervision, oversight, and accreditation—critical gaps that need addressing. Supportive supervision and accreditation of training and experience can serve as strong motivators and enhance effectiveness. A coordinated capacity development programme should include technical coaching, mentoring, and an accessible accreditation mechanism that recognizes CLSWW roles, responsibilities, and required competencies.

SECTION 3 - CARRYING OUT AN ASSESSMENT WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM STRENGTHENING

This section outlines a process for developing strategies to strengthen the CLSWW either in a project or across a wider geographic area. The process starts by analysing the context in which the CLSWW operates, then reviewing the quality of work. Using the CPSS lens (see *Introduction to the Reflective Guidance* above), the assessment identifies strengths and gaps in legal frameworks and the nature of the current CLSWW, including its roles and competencies. The steps for the strategy development and implementation are as follows:

Step 1) Prepare for the assessment

Step 2) Understand the current state (Essential)

Step 3) Collect primary data (Optional)

Step 4) Reflect on quality of CLSWW strengthening work

Step 5) Identify and prioritize actions for improvement

The process of undertaking the assessment is important in helping Save the Children COs and other stakeholders to:

- Gauge government commitment and strategic direction.
- Understand laws and regulations defining the CLSWW.
- Map key actors for coordination.
- Analyse the CLSWW's roles, responsibilities, and their capacity needs and gaps.
- Identify strengths including existing support and services, as well as gaps at community level.
- Strengthen linkages with the wider child protection system.
- Apply a do no harm approach.

The assessment can be part of a project or a broader national or sub-national program. In both cases, working in partnership with the government as well as organizations such as UNICEF and other I/NGOs focusing on the strengthening of the CLSWW is essential. At minimum, use desk reviews; where possible, add interviews and consultations. The assessment should be reflected upon and updated regularly—not a one-off exercise.

STEP 1 - Prepare for the assessment

- Identify the individuals from the CO who will be involved in the assessment process. Ideally, the Child Protection Technical Advisor (CP TA) and relevant Child Protection Technical Expertise (TE), will lead the technical aspects of the assessment. The CP TA should work closely with Child Protection Assistants, Officers, Coordinators, Program Managers, and Specialists who are or will be engaged in strengthening the CLSWW. They should collaborate with Monitoring Evaluation Accountability Learning (MEAL) colleagues, who will provide valuable insights on the approaches and methods for data collection and analysis.
- List key stakeholders who are already working on the strengthening of the CLSWW and learn about their roles. This could be the social welfare department of the government, UNICEF, other I/NGOs, training institutions, and other CSOs.
- Collect internal documents as well as relevant materials from the organizations mentioned above. These should include, but not be limited to:

- o Job descriptions that define the roles and responsibilities of the CLSWW.
- o Lists / descriptions of key competencies that identify the knowledge and skills required for their roles.
- o Documents that describe how capacity development programmes for the CLSWW are structured and implemented (training outlines, modules, guidance notes for technical mentoring).
- o Documents that describe how the CLSWW is accredited.
- o Any relevant laws, policies, rules, regulations, schemes, or other guidelines that define roles and responsibilities, set ethical and practice standards for the CLSWW and define expected levels of qualification, experience, or competence.
- o Evaluations or similar documents that incorporate lessons learnt about the effectiveness of the CLSWW.
- o Other existing mappings or context assessments related to the CLSWW, as they may reduce the need for new analysis. Agencies such as UNICEF and SC often conduct mappings of social welfare and child protection systems, child rights situational analyses, or workforce assessments (see Strengthening Child Protection Systems: Guidance for Country Offices).

  Use these resources to avoid duplication unless significant time has passed or the context has changed dramatically (e.g., post-conflict vs. pre-conflict).

- ● Seek opportunities to build consensus with others working on the CLSWW or broader child protection to collaborate on the assessment. Strategic collaboration with the government and other child protection actors is essential to amplify impact. When introducing a new CLSWW cadre through a project, joint planning and coordination are essential to avoid duplication, create synergies, and support scalability.

Step 2 – Understand the current state (ESSENTIAL)

- ● Document the current state of the CLSWW using the collected materials, focusing on: positions, titles, definitions (e.g., paid/unpaid, formal contracts/incentive workers or community-appointed), roles and responsibilities, key competencies, selection criteria, capacity development programs (training, supervision), and accreditation.
- ● Consider using the provided matrix to organize information.
- ● Clarify information gaps through interviews with key stakeholders (e.g., in government, UNICEF) already engaged in the CLSWW strengthening. If deeper analysis is needed, CO teams may conduct structured interviews with the CLSWW and community members as outlined in Step 3—though this step is optional.

Table 2: The Current State of the CLSWW

Questions	Response	Source of Information
Legal Framework		
Is there a legal, policy, and regulatory framework that defines the CLSWW in the country? If so, what does it entail?		
In the absence of specific laws, are there rules, regulations, or other forms of guidance related to the work and strengthening of the CLSWW? If so, what are they?		

Title, Definition, and Population distribution		
Is/are the CLSWW currently in place? If so: - What is/are the CLSWW's job title(s)? - Who are the CLSWW affiliated with - the government, NGOs, or other organizations? -Which organizations are currently supporting the CLSWW and what is the geographic spread? - Is the government playing a lead role in supporting the CLSWW? If not, what support can be provided to help prioritize this? - How many CLSWW are there, and where are they located? - On average, how many children and community members does one CLSWW support?		
Do standard job descriptions exist for the CLSWW —either government-led or developed through inter-agency collaboration?		
Working practices and recruitment		
How many hours does an individual full time and/or part time CLSWW work daily on average?		
Is the CLSWW remunerated or unpaid? Do they receive any other compensation?		
What are the working practices of the CLSWW? For example, do they work in pairs, in mixed-gender teams, or as part of a group alongside other frontline workers such as those in health and education, or members of community-based child		

protection mechanisms like Child Protection Committees or Groups?		
Who manages/supervises the CLSWW?		
Are there established eligibility criteria for recruiting the CLSWW? If so, what are they? How are the CLSWW selected for their roles?		
Roles and responsibilities		
What are the roles and responsibilities of the CLSWW[3]?		
What other tasks, beyond child protection, are the CLSWW expected to undertake[4]? By who?		
Where expected, what additional tasks does the CLSWW have to undertake in preparation for and in response to humanitarian crises?		
What resources are currently allocated to support the CLSWW in carrying out their tasks? For instance, provisions for travel, phones, internet access, or materials for sensitization sessions? By who?		
What risks could affect the work of the CLSWW, and what measures are in place to mitigate these risks?		
What social norms and power dynamics influence the roles of the CLSWW, and in what ways?		

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[3] Examples may include ensuring basic needs are met, reuniting displaced family members, supporting the arrangement of alternative care when necessary, referring children in need to specialized services such as legal aid and case management, assisting case management service providers, facilitating access to social protection benefits, providing MHPSS support and services, disseminating critical information and dispelling myths, and mobilizing peer and community support networks (adapted from *The Vital Role of the Social Service Workforce in Humanitarian Contexts*, GSSWA 2022).

[4] Examples may include SGBV prevention and response for adults, as well as social protection.

How does the CLSWW address these?		
What other challenges do the CLSWW experience in carrying out their roles, and how are these challenges addressed?		
Competencies and capacity development		
Have key competencies been identified for the CLSWW? If so, what are they? How well are these competencies aligned with their roles?		
What training programs do the CLSWW participate in? What are the key topics covered? Are there any existing training modules or materials?		
How long do the training programs last, and how frequently are they conducted?		
Who is responsible for training the CLSWW? If multiple agencies are involved, how is the training coordinated?		
How is ongoing technical supervision organized? What are the key topics? Who provides it, and how frequently is it conducted?		
What other learning opportunities are provided to the CLSWW in addition to the training and supervision (where provided)?		
How is the capacity of the CLSWW assessed? Who conducts the assessment, and how frequently is it carried out?		
Does a system of accreditation exist or has one been attempted? If so, what was the experience?		
Coordination		
Is there a mechanism for inter-agency coordinating efforts to		

strengthen the CLSWW at national level? Who leads this coordination? How does the coordination mechanism work?		
What coordination exists between the CLSWW and formal or informal child protection service providers at sub-national or provincial level? For example, are there regular meetings, referral processes, or systems for allocating tasks?		
CO teams can add any additional questions as deemed relevant.		

Step 3 - Collect primary data (OPTIONAL)

● Complement the desk review with primary data when needed to fill knowledge gaps. This step adds qualitative insights from stakeholders such as the CLSWW, children, parents, community members, and government officials.

● Take this step if gaps identified in Step 2 are significant or if deeper understanding is needed to strengthen specific aspects of CLSWW work. Identify gaps and determine who to consult based on the areas needing clarification, using the table below as a reference.

Table 3: Who to reach out to based on knowledge gaps and needs

Knowledge Gaps and Needs	Who to Reach Out To (Examples)
Legal framework	• Government ministry/department leading legal framework • UNICEF
Title, definition, and population distribution	• Government ministry defining workforce and allocation • UNICEF • The CLSWW
Working practices and recruitment	• Government ministry and child protection agency staff overseeing the CLSWW • The CLSWW • Community members involved in selection or interaction
Roles and responsibilities	• The CLSWW • Community members and children interacting with the CLSWW • Supervising officials and agency staff • Formal/informal service providers
Competencies and capacity development	• The CLSWW • Officials and agency staff supporting capacity development • Community members and children
Coordination (national level)	• Government ministry overseeing the CLSWW • UNICEF • Other child protection actors
Coordination (sub-national/community level)	• The CLSWW • Formal/informal service providers at local level • Community members and children

● Choose and adapt data collection methods such as focus groups, interviews, and surveys. Ensure ethical standards and address safeguarding and security risks with mitigation measures to keep participants and staff safe.

- Define key questions based on identified knowledge gaps. Use or adapt questions from *Table 2: The Current State of the CLSWW*. For example, if exploring CLSWW working hours, ask: "On average, how many hours do you work each day?"
- Where appropriate, refer to Annex 1: *Examples of FGD and KII Questions*. Simplify and adapt these to suit the stakeholders being interviewed.

Step 4 – Reflect on quality of CLSWW strengthening work

- Consolidate findings from Step 2 and Step 3 (if done), combining desk review and primary data. Look for:
  - Patterns, connections, and contradictions
  - Key insights on factors such as legal framework, definitions, roles, and responsibilities
- Assess strengths and weaknesses of current projects/programs using the provided format. Best practices and ineffective practices provide a clear contrast to guide your assessment.
- Review if further data collection is needed to address gaps or contradictions. If evidence is unavailable, note this for future review.

Table 4: Quality of CLSWW Strengthening Work

Quality of Practice		Strengths and Weaknesses
Best practice	**Ineffective practice**	**Key findings**
Legal framework		
The legal framework clearly defines the CLSWW, including their title and roles, resulting in official recognition within national laws and policies.	The legal framework regulating the CLSWW roles is weak or absent. This may be due to limited interest in legal reform and the allocation of resources related to the social welfare workforce, particularly at the community level.	**Strengths**
		Weaknesses / gaps
Workforce planning and management		
The CLSWW is clearly defined, including the management structure overseeing their work.	The CLSWW is undefined, and the management structure overseeing their work is either non-existent or not functioning. It remains unclear who is responsible for the management and support of the CLSWW.	**Strengths**
		Weaknesses / gaps
Workforce ratios for the CLSWW are carefully planned based on the population of community members, including children. Ideally, a male and female CLSWW work in pairs within a community to ensure gender-sensitive support.	Workforce ratios are not adequately planned, and gender sensitivity is lacking in workforce composition and deployment.	**Strengths**
		Weaknesses / gaps

Roles and responsibilities / working practice		
The roles and responsibilities of the CLSWW are clearly defined and documented in their job descriptions.	The roles and responsibilities of the CLSWW are unclear and not formally documented.	**Strengths**
		Weaknesses / gaps
The roles and responsibilities of the CLSWW are informed by the local context and designed to meet children's needs while leveraging existing community capacity in child protection.	The roles and responsibilities of the CLSWW are not well aligned with the local context. As a result, they may not adequately address children's needs or reflect the existing community capacity in child protection.	**Strengths**
		Weaknesses / gaps
Careful consideration is given to ensure that the support provided by the CLSWW is ethical, safe, and does no harm.	The CLSWW may be required to handle complex, sensitive issues, without adequate consideration of potential harm, including risks to children's safety.	**Strengths**
		Weaknesses / gaps
The CLSWW working practices are aligned with their roles and responsibilities. Their workload is manageable, and their wellbeing and self-care are adequately supported.	The CLSWW working practices are inconsistently defined and poorly aligned with their roles. This leads to unclear expectations and limited attention to their wellbeing and self-care.	**Strengths**
		Weaknesses / gaps
Codes of Conduct, Child Safeguarding, and PSEAH[5] policies are in place. The CLSWW are aware of these policies, and clear reporting and follow-up mechanisms for non-compliance are established and functioning.	Codes of Conduct, Child Safeguarding, and PSEAH policies are absent. The CLSWW lack awareness of these policies, and reporting and follow-up mechanisms are either missing or not effectively implemented.	**Strengths**
		Weaknesses / gaps
The modality of support for marginalized children and families is clearly defined in Standard Operating Procedures or other relevant guidance.	The modality of support for marginalized children and families is not clearly defined or documented.	**Strengths**
		Weaknesses / gaps
The modality for collecting, storing, and sharing	Protocols for handling sensitive information about	**Strengths**

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[5] Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment

information about children and community members is designed to be safe and ethical. Protocols are in place to handle sensitive information in a safe and confidential manner, where relevant to the CLSWW roles.	children are not well established, even though the CLSWW are involved in gathering and documenting data.	**Weaknesses / gaps**
Sensitivity to Community Norms and Power Dynamics		
The CLSWW are aware of gender and social norms, as well as power dynamics within the community. They apply this understanding sensitively in their work and prioritize the needs and best interests of the most marginalized children and their families.	The CLSWW either operate strictly within traditional gender and social norms and power dynamics without questioning them or lack an understanding of them altogether.	**Strengths**
		Weaknesses / gaps
The CLSWW effectively address existing norms and power disparities while demonstrating understanding of sensitivities and maintaining and strengthening positive relationships with community members.	The CLSWW aggressively challenge existing norms and power disparities, without fully considering or respecting the local sensitivities. This could lead to reduced trust and strained relationships within the community.	**Strengths**
		Weaknesses / gaps
Eligibility criteria and selection		
The eligibility criteria for the CLSWW are clear and aligned with the roles and responsibilities of the CLSWW. These are well understood by community members involved in the selection process.	The eligibility criteria for the CLSWW are absent or insufficient. Community members are not engaged in the selection process.	**Strengths**
		Weaknesses / gaps
Competencies		
The competencies are clearly articulated in job descriptions or other relevant documents. They are logically aligned with the specific roles and responsibilities.	The competencies required for roles are either not clearly identified or not documented. In cases where competencies are selected, they lack alignment with their roles.	**Strengths**
		Weaknesses / gaps
Competencies include soft skills such as being humble, active listening, and showing empathy, that the CLSWW	The list of competencies may exist, but it primarily focuses on knowledge areas rather than the skills required to	**Strengths**
		Weaknesses / gaps

need to effectively perform their roles in the community.	effectively support children in the community.	

Capacity development – systematic training and supervision		
The CLSWW actively participate in a phased training that is systematically structured around key competencies. The training is carefully designed to support their technical capacity development in a step-by-step manner and is facilitated by trained and experienced practitioners.	The CLSWW have limited or no opportunities to systematically develop their competencies. Training is conducted on an ad hoc basis, often dependent on project funding. The training lacks proper planning, with trainers who are not adequately equipped to facilitate key topics effectively.	**Strengths** **Weaknesses / gaps**
The CLSWW receive contextually appropriate supervision in both methodology and frequency, delivered by trained and experienced technical supervisors. Ongoing technical supervision strengthens the CLSWW over time, improving the quality of support they provide.	The CLSWW have limited or no access to ongoing supervision or adequate capacity-building. Technical supervisors may be absent or not properly assigned. Some CLSWW, volunteering without proper support, take on significant responsibilities that risk causing harm to children.	**Strengths** **Weaknesses / gaps**

Recognition / Accreditation		
Where accreditation is feasible, the CLSWW are certified and registered within the national child protection system. Where not feasible, alternative measures—such as capacity assessment and formal recognition—are implemented to acknowledge their roles.	No system exists for accreditation or certification, and no alternative measures are considered to recognize the CLSWW's contributions, leading to reduced motivation and retention.	**Strengths** **Weaknesses / gaps**

Coordination (national or sub-national level)		
A formal coordination mechanism exists to strengthen the CLSWW, or existing mechanisms are effectively utilized for this purpose. In development contexts, these are led or co-led by the government with support from child protection agencies; in humanitarian settings, they are integrated	No formal coordination mechanism exists for strengthening the CLSWW, and responsibility within government remains unclear. While some organizations include CLSWW in their programs, there is no unified understanding of their role.	**Strengths** **Weaknesses / gaps**

into the humanitarian coordination system.		
The coordination group meets regularly to discuss ways to improve the availability and the quality of support provided by the CLSWW. Agreed actions are implemented and monitored to ensure progress.	The coordination group does not exist or exists but is not functioning well to improve efficiency and effectiveness of support provided by the CLSWW.	**Strengths** **Weaknesses / gaps**
Local referral mechanism		
The CLSWW coordinate support for children with service providers (e.g., education, health, legal aid) within the broader child protection system. Service mapping is regularly updated and accessible.	The CLSWW do not effectively coordinate with service providers, and service mapping is either nonexistent or not regularly updated.	**Strengths** **Weaknesses / gaps**
Service providers within the referral network receive ongoing training on child protection, child safeguarding, and gender-sensitive practices.	Service providers are not trained on child protection, child safeguarding, and gender-sensitive practices.	**Strengths** **Weaknesses / gaps**
Resource mobilization		
Sufficient long-term financial, material, and logistical resources are available to enable the CLSWW to perform their duties competently and accountably. Resource mobilization efforts are ongoing.	Long-term resources are unavailable, with limited effort to mobilize additional support. The government shows little motivation to prioritize resource allocation for strengthening the CLSWW.	**Strengths** **Weaknesses / gaps**
Sustainability planning		
A long-term sustainability plan for strengthening the CLSWW is developed at the inter-agency level, led by the government authority responsible for supporting the workforce. The plan includes strategies for securing a budget to sustain the CLSWW.	There is no consideration for sustainability, and the existence of the CLSWW depends entirely on external agency projects.	**Strengths** **Weaknesses / gaps**
		CO teams can add any additional assessment findings as deemed relevant.

Step 5 - Identify and prioritize actions for improvement

- Discuss and agree on a strategy for strengthening the CLSWW based on gaps identified in Step 4, using the table below. For example, if roles are unclear, the CO team can refine them to align with the local context. Select multiple actions as needed.
- Prioritize urgent actions to meet immediate needs, considering available resources and efforts by other actors in the child protection system (ex. child protection agencies, UNICEF, government). Also discuss longer-term strategies to ensure that the CLSWW can perform effectively and sustainably.
- Leverage existing in-country capacity to address gaps. Strengths identified in Step 4 can guide planning and implementation. For instance, if technical supervisors are lacking but the government plans to deploy child protection officers, they may support CLSWW supervision. Similarly, agencies with the CLSWW job descriptions can share them for adaptation and harmonization. Given that child protection efforts are often underfunded, amplifying existing policies, practices, personnel, and networks is key to sustainable, collaborative action.

Table 5: Identified Gaps and Strategic Actions for CLSWW Strengthening

If you find any of the following as a weakness or a gap in your context…	Then you can consider including the below actions in your strategy.
Legal framework There is no legal framework that formally recognizes the role of the CLSWW.	Advocate for strengthening laws, regulations, and policies regulating the CLSWW. SC and other child protection organizations can conduct analysis of legal and regulatory gaps affecting the CLSWW and address these. In the absence of relevant legal frameworks, COs can develop or strengthen guidance documents that articulate CLSWW roles and enable the systematic functioning of the CLSWW.
Management It remains unclear who is responsible for the management of the CLSWW.	Clarify who manages the CLSWW. Ensure that designated government officials or agency staff are identified as responsible for managing the CLSWW, and that the CLSWW can access their support when needed.
Roles and responsibilities / working practices The roles performed by the CLSWW are either not clearly defined or are not rooted in the local context. The working practices of the CLSWW are inconsistently decided and do not align with their roles and responsibilities.	Define or re-define the CLSWW and their roles and working practices in consultation with key stakeholders—government officials, UN agencies, I/NGOs/CSOs, CLSWW themselves, and community members. This should build on existing tasks while addressing gaps identified in the assessment. Discussions should include the most appropriate type of workforce (e.g., volunteer or paraprofessional) and whether roles should be paid or unpaid. Develop or adapt contextually appropriate job descriptions accordingly.
Sensitivity to Community Norms and Power Dynamics The CLSWW either lack understanding of the community context or operate strictly within it.	Ensure that the CLSWW's roles and responsibilities include a thorough understanding of gender, social norms, and power dynamics within the community, and involve respectful, sensitive action to address these. Equip the CLSWW with these skills and tools by integrating them into the competency

	framework, as well as embedding them into training and supervision processes.
Eligibility criteria and selection The eligibility criteria for the CLSWW are not clearly determined or documented.	Identify or adjust the eligibility criteria, in coordination with the relevant authorities, for the CLSWW to ensure that these are clear and aligned with the roles and responsibilities of the CLSWW. These should be well understood by community members involved in the selection process.
Competencies The role-specific competencies of the CLSWW are not clearly defined or documented.	Identify the competencies required for CLSWW roles, ensuring they align logically with the roles and responsibilities. Competencies should be documented in the job descriptions to guide the ongoing capacity development of the CLSWW.
Capacity development - competency based training The training is provided on an ad hoc basis, depending on the availability of project funding, which does not lead to consistent capacity growth for the CLSWW.	Adapt or develop capacity development programs based on identified competencies. These may include training, technical supervision, reflective learning workshops, job placement, or a combination of these, and can incorporate remote learning and support. The phased training program should be systematically structured around key competencies, designed to enhance the CLSWW technical capacity step by step, and facilitated by trained, experienced practitioners.
Capacity development - on the job training and supportive supervision Technical supervision is not regularly provided to meet the learning and development needs of the CLSWW.	Improve the structure and quality of technical supervision by ensuring each CLSWW has an assigned supervisor who provides ongoing coaching and mentoring. This role should exist within the child protection system. If not, SC and other actors can temporarily fulfil this function while advocating for the government to formally establish it. Supervisors must be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide technical support.
Capacity development - accreditation No measures are in place to properly recognize the important roles performed by the CLSWW.	Where feasible, consider introducing an accreditation mechanism to formally recognize CLSWW roles. Where not feasible, alternative measures, such as capacity assessment and formal recognition, can help acknowledge their contributions.
Coordination (national level) Agencies are working on the strengthening of the CLSWW in a fragmented manner. There is no coordination mechanism for the strengthening of the CLSWW.	Ensure coordination with the government and other agencies working to strengthen the CLSWW at national or sub-national levels. Support leadership of duty bearers in this process. Where a child protection coordination mechanism exists, use it effectively to advance the CLSWW strengthening efforts.
Local referral mechanism The CLSWW lack effective coordination with local service providers, resulting in the absence of a functional referral mechanism.	Collaborate with community-level and local support and service providers to ensure safe and appropriate referrals. Service mapping should be regularly updated and accessible. Service providers should receive ongoing training on child protection, safeguarding, and gender-sensitive practices.

Resource mobilization There is insufficient effort to mobilize additional resources to enable the CLSWW to perform their roles.	Support the government and other duty bearers in developing a collaborative, costed strategy and resource mobilization plan to strengthen the CLSWW. Where possible, advocate for its inclusion in national action plans on ending violence against children or related areas to secure public and donor funding.
Sustainability planning There is no consideration for sustainability, and the existence of the CLSWW is solely dependent on the availability of external agency projects.	Develop a sustainability plan for strengthening the CLSWW at the inter-agency level, in collaboration with the relevant government authority. The plan should include a broader resource mobilization strategy and financial mechanisms to ensure long-term, sustained support for the CLSWW.

- Based on the actions prioritized, develop an action plan in collaboration with all relevant key stakeholders involved in strengthening the CLSWW. At a minimum, the action plan should outline:
  - ✓ Objectives that directly address the key gaps identified
  - ✓ Short-term and long-term actions to be taken
  - ✓ Existing resources that can be leveraged
  - ✓ Roles and responsibilities, including who will take the lead on what
  - ✓ Timeframe

  Organize a participatory workshop with stakeholders involved in Steps 2, 3 (if conducted), and 4 to collaboratively develop the action plan. Save the Children's CP TA, CP TE, or relevant project lead is best placed to facilitate the process. Use simplified, context-appropriate facilitation methods to promote inclusive dialogue, ensuring all voices are heard and the action plan reflects local realities.
- Use the template in the annex to document updates when helpful.
- Adapt the action plan as the context evolves.
- Where applicable, refer to the following section to identify key tasks linked to each action. This will help the CO team and stakeholders develop action plans that are specific, practical, and achievable.

SECTION 4 – IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN THE COMMUNITY LEVEL SOCIAL WELFARE WORKFORCE

This section guides the CO team and child protection stakeholders in taking concrete steps to strengthen the CLSWW, based on the action plans developed earlier. In response to urgent gaps identified in the synthesis report, it focuses on capacity development through a competency-based framework—defining roles, identifying required competencies, and designing structured training and supervision. It also serves as a tool for ongoing reflection to assess what works and what may need adjustment for more effective implementation of the action plans.

IMPROVING LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Advocate for the strengthening of laws, regulations, and policies that explicitly recognize and support the CLSWW. While all nine countries studied have ratified major international conventions and enacted legislation related to child protection, most lack robust legal frameworks that define and regulate the roles of the CLSWW. In the absence of formal laws, several countries have developed guidance documents that enable the systematic functioning of the CLSWW. For example, Burkina Faso has a *Reference Document for Community Child Protection Committees*, and Colombia's *Manual Operativo* outlines expectations for community parents. Uganda stands out with its *2022 National Framework for Strengthening the Social Service Workforce,* which includes the CLSWW.

Where legal reform is not immediately feasible, collaboration with government should focus on developing or strengthening those guidelines that clearly define CLSWW roles, responsibilities, and support modalities. Clear job descriptions and documentation of their contributions to marginalized children and families can help influence future legal frameworks and enhance recognition of the CLSWW. Importantly, any amendments or new guidelines should reflect the evidence base on strengthening community-level child protection. For instance, there is growing consensus among child protection organizations on the importance of community ownership and the need to carefully define CLSWW roles in case management. Rather than assigning them direct case management responsibilities, the CLSWW should be empowered to coordinate and support the process by liaising with trained and experienced caseworkers and relevant community actors.

Save the Children and other child protection organizations should regularly assess legal and regulatory gaps, as well as the quality and implementation of existing guidance documents, and address these. Particularly, Save the Children should demonstrate robust technical leadership in enabling governments and child protection organizations to reflect on these developments in the child protection sector and integrate them into revised legal and policy frameworks. In countries where laws already define roles for formal social workers or the broader social services workforce, the CLSWW should be integrated into these frameworks as paraprofessionals or community-based actors who complement and extend the reach of formal services—particularly in underserved or rural areas.

EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

Ensure that the CLSWW can access support from a manager, enabling them to perform their roles and responsibilities. It is important to clarify who manages the CLSWW, which may include government officials or agency staff. The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action's

[Child Protection Case Management Supervision and Coaching Training Package](#) (2018) provides valuable insights into the two models of structures for management and supervision.
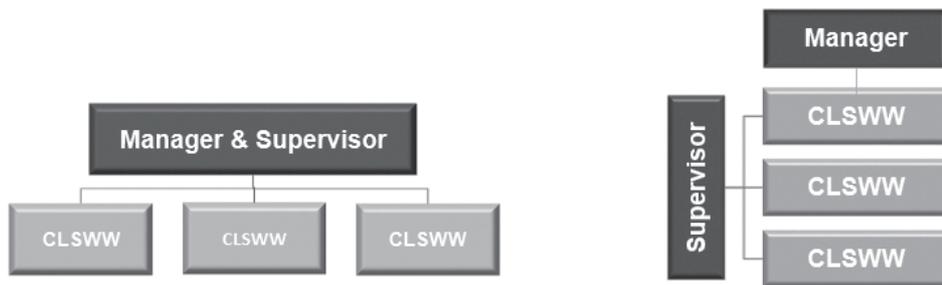
In one structure (on the left side), the direct line manager serves as both the technical and administrative supervisor for the CLSWW. In another (on the right side), a technical supervisor—internal or external to the team—provides technical support, while an administrative manager oversees operations. It is important to consider the relationship between the CLSWW and their supervisor, prioritizing a sense of safety and trust. In some cases, separating the roles may create a safer space for open dialogue; in others, combining them may offer consistent support. Financial and human resource availability should also inform decisions on the most appropriate setup.

Regardless of the structure, technical supervisors must have relevant child protection and community engagement experience, along with supervision skills—not simply assume the role due to their managerial position. This may require careful planning to enhance their capacity effectively. Please refer to the section on *TECHNICAL SUPERVISION* and ANNEX 6: *Do's and Don'ts list for supervisors of the CLSWW*.

Workforce-to-supervisor ratios should be context-specific and agreed upon by child protection agencies. For example, case management typically recommends one supervisor per 5–6 caseworkers, but ratios for the CLSWW should reflect their roles and support needs. If technical supervision is separate, one manager may oversee a larger group. This may be challenging in local government settings with limited staff, so close collaboration with local child protection agencies can help strengthen capacity in technical supervision.

IDENTIFYING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Review the current job descriptions or roles identified in Steps 2 and 3. In some contexts, CLSWW roles may be unclear or undefined. Where needed, **establish roles based on tasks already performed and the needs of children and communities.** Coordinate with other agencies working on workforce strengthening to agree on appropriate roles and responsibilities. When defining or redefining CLSWW roles and responsibilities, consider the following four aspects:

- Alignment with Needs: Roles should directly respond to the needs of children, families, and communities. For example, in areas where corporal punishment is common, the CLSWW can play a key role in preventing violence against children.
- Community Capacity: Roles must reflect the community's motivation and capacity to protect children and remain manageable for the CLSWW. In communities with active peer support networks, CLSWW can enhance these efforts. However, assigning complex case management tasks without adequate systems may risk harm and should be avoided.
- Working Conditions: Roles should align with existing conditions such as working hours and remuneration, ensuring fair compensation while respecting community voluntarism.
- Feasibility: Roles must be realistic within available financial and human resources. While communities and governments may expect the CLSWW to take on more responsibilities,

expanding roles requires investment in capacity development. Decisions should be made with government and child protection agencies, considering potentially shared resources.

Strategically select appropriate CLSWW roles and responsibilities, considering the aspects outlined above. Table 6 presents typical roles identified as suitable across various settings. The first five are foundational—covering community engagement, understanding local contexts, personal development, self-care, and safeguarding—and should be core duties for all CLSWW. It is important to note that a fixed list of roles cannot be universally applied. **Roles must be context-specific.** The list provided is illustrative, not prescriptive. Each CO should determine relevant roles based on local needs and gaps, adding relevant responsibilities as needed.

Table 6: Typical roles and key tasks of the CLSWW

Responsibilities	Key Roles / Tasks	Guidance on Proper Selection
Foundational (all the CLSWW are expected to have)		
Build and strengthen trust with children and community members	- Build strong connections with community members from diverse backgrounds to foster trust and understanding. - Establish professional relationships with local authorities, including village leaders, religious leaders, and other key individuals.	
Address power disparities and promote inclusiveness	- Analyze power dynamics among different stakeholders within the community. - Support the participation of diverse community members, including girls, boys, women, men, children, and people with disabilities, based on this analysis.	
Assess harms to children and community resources (child protection risk and protective factors)	- Analyze the risks and vulnerabilities that affect the protection of children within the community. - Identify community resources, such as support and services, that can enhance the protection of children in the community.	
Cultivate growth and development individually and as a group	- Regularly reflect, both individually and in groups, on the support provided to children and families, identifying ways to improve practices. - Attend one-on-one or peer-to-peer supervision sessions and actively seek feedback from supervisors and others. - Provide constructive feedback to supervisors and others on the functioning of the CLSWW. - Fully participate in training relevant to the roles. - Collaborate effectively with fellow CLSWW, fostering teamwork and mutual learning. - Promote self-care and wellbeing.	Strategically select based on the capacity development program implemented at country or project level. The frequency of training and supervision opportunities is determined by the learning needs of the CLSWW, as well as the available human and financial resources.

Keep children and communities we work for / with safe and protected	- Adhere to Save the Children's Child Safeguarding and PSEAH policies. - Promote understanding about child safeguarding and PSEAH among the CLSWW, their peers, and in the community.	The name and ownership of the policies should be tailored to fit the specific context.
Adaptable (they have to be adapted to the context or the project, based on their relevancy)		
Enhance and systematize the existing capacity in child protection in and around the community	- Develop strategies to effectively utilize available resources in addressing child protection risks and vulnerabilities. - Collaborate with community members to identify both immediate and long-term action plans for protecting children, leveraging their existing capacity. - Effectively coordinate and collaborate with support and service providers within and outside the community to strengthen child protection prevention and response efforts.	These should be included as much as possible, particularly when the focus of the CLSWW's roles is on prevention. This will enable community members to identify and implement effective prevention strategies with support from the CLSWW.
Strengthen families and promote family-based care	- Prevent unnecessary family separation. - Provide guidance and support to parents and caregivers in implementing positive parenting practices, including support in kinship care. - Support family-based care providers, including through home visits. - Facilitate access to appropriate support and services to ensure the basic needs of children and families are met. - Facilitate access to social protection benefits. - Support family tracing and reunification in humanitarian settings, as required by the government or within the project scope.	One or more of these roles will be selected when child protection issues, such as corporal punishment and family separation, are critical concerns within the respective context. Linking children and families to social protection benefits should be considered where the CLSWW has a defined role in supporting access to such schemes.
Prevent and mitigate specific child protection risks	- Collaborate with communities to strengthen interventions that protect children and address harmful practices. - Negotiate with local authorities, such as community leaders and religious leaders, to address harmful social and gender norms. - Disseminate critical information related to children's protection and wellbeing. - Facilitate meetings and dialogues on children's rights, the impact of specific child protection issues, and child protection preventative measures. - Collaborate with relevant support and service providers, such as those in health, education, and livelihoods, to mitigate specific child protection risks.	One or more of these roles will be selected when specific child protection issues, such as child labour and child marriage, are critical concerns within the community context. Identify key risks and collaborate with relevant actors. For example, address school violence with education stakeholders, child labor with livelihood and social protection actors, and climate risks with Disaster Risk Reduction agencies.

Respond to specific child protection risks	- Ensure immediate safety and protection of children, as guided by caseworkers.
	- Recognize and link at-risk children to child protection case management services, including safe and ethical response to disclosures of child survivors of SGBV cases.
	- Provide support to children and their families as outlined in a child's case plan, under the guidance of caseworkers. Possible support may include:
	   o Referring children in need and their families to relevant community support and formal services in line with the case plan.
	   o Conducting regular home visits to encourage safe and nurturing family environments.
	- Establish and strengthen safe, ethical, and gender-sensitive local or community-level referral pathways.
		These roles should be carefully considered when the CLSWW is already involved in the process of case management. Their involvement should align with case management protocols and be guided by trained and experienced caseworkers to ensure ethical support. These could include safe recognition and referral of cases, as well as case follow-up. Refer to *A Toolkit for Community Child Protection Volunteers, Part 1: Volunteers' Roles in Supporting Case Management (CPHA 2021)*, for more information.

Champion children's voices in advocacy and influencing (promotive function)	- Engage meaningfully with children and youth, learning from their views in a safe and inclusive manner. - Demonstrate commitment to amplifying children's voices in advocacy efforts, ensuring their perspectives inform decision-making processes at the community level. - Promote child-led initiatives where children can actively contribute to shaping actions that affect their lives in the community.	These should be included as much as possible, particularly when the CLSWW's roles include community-level advocacy. This will enable community members to identify and implement advocacy strategy, ensuring children's views are considered in decision-making.
Contribute to humanitarian assistance	- Provide basic and immediate child-friendly information and assistance to children and families affected by disasters, following guidance from formal or informal emergency responders. Examples of support actions may include supporting safe recognition and referral of at-risk children (ex. unaccompanied and separated children), distribution of non-food items, hygiene and dignity kits, and facilitation of MHPSS and educational support, including group activities for children. - Ensure that child protection standards are upheld in humanitarian assistance, guaranteeing that the protection needs of children are recognized and addressed within the broader humanitarian response.	These roles should be carefully considered when the CLSWW is already involved or will be involved in the process of humanitarian assistance. It is essential to ensure the response is contextually appropriate and effective in addressing immediate needs while considering long-term protection concerns for children. Where possible, identify specific actions by referring to *The Vital Role of the Social Service Workforce in Humanitarian Contexts (GSSWA 2022)*.

	- Advocate for the mobilization of greater resources to ensure the safety and protection of children. - Negotiate with key stakeholders to increase resources aimed at promoting the wellbeing and reducing the vulnerabilities of children.	
Promote emergency preparedness and anticipatory actions	- Work with communities to identify and employ measures to prepare for or mitigate the impact of a potential emergency. → This links to roles such as *Enhance and systematize the existing capacity in child protection in and around the community*. Add relevant tasks under the responsibility where needed. - Share information with the public about emergency risks and how to prepare for or mitigate them. These include knowledge of the causes and effects of climate change-related disasters. → This links to roles such as *Prevent and mitigate specific child protection risks*, and *Strengthen families and promote family-based care*. Add relevant tasks under the responsibility where needed.	These roles should be prioritized in contexts where the risk and likelihood of both man-made and natural disasters are high. Emergency preparedness plans should ensure that systems and resources are in place to respond effectively and mitigate the impact on vulnerable children and their families. For more information, refer to *The Vital Role of the Social Service Workforce in Humanitarian Contexts* (GSSWA 2022).
Others		*CO teams can add any roles as deemed relevant. "Paraprofessionals in the Social Service Workforce: Guiding Principles, Functions and Competencies (GSSWA 2017)" also gives insights.*

If documentation (e.g. written reports) is part of the CLSWW roles, include it in the role description. It may not be realistic for the CLSWW to thoroughly document their work. In many communities, they are better positioned to support children through verbal communication rather than formal documentation. If records are kept, clear protocols must be in place to handle sensitive information in a safe and confidential manner.

Once roles are defined, ensure CLSWW working conditions are appropriate and standardized across child protection actors. Avoid unfair working conditions for the CLSWW. The workload and working conditions should be appropriately balanced with the roles of the CLSWW. These should include:

● Working hours: Full-time or part-time, based on community needs and CLSWW responsibilities and availability.
● Remuneration: Paid or unpaid, considering the feasibility within the given context and available resources.
●   Other support and compensation: Coverage for transport, phone use, and essential expenses that enable the CLSWW to carry out their work effectively. It could also include something that identifies their role, such as an ID card, t-shirt, or bag. It is important to be sensitive to existing practices around remuneration, as financially compensating volunteer roles may unintentionally create expectations for incentives that may not be sustained if a project ends or government funding decreases.

- Workforce structure: Number and gender balance of the CLSWW per location. In some contexts, the CLSWW may be embedded within broader community-based child protection mechanisms, such as Child Protection Groups or Committees.

Many CLSWW work seven days a week without pay, relying on personal resources like phones and motorcycles. This exploitation of voluntarism leads to burnout, low motivation, and high turnover. Fair and well-planned working conditions are essential to ensure CLSWW remain effective, motivated, and well-supported.

SENSITIVITY TO COMMUNITY NORMS AND POWER DYNAMICS

Ensure that effective community engagement is central to defining roles and strengthening competencies. Effective community engagement can create space where community members and children discuss how to keep children safe and protected in their communities and implement these actions in a more sustainable way. This thereby ensures alignment between the actions and the lived experiences of children and community members. These community-level initiatives require a greater level of community ownership. To enable community ownership, the CLSWW must build trust, listen, and learn from the broader community. Understanding context—culture, language, gender, and norms—is crucial, as communities differ widely. This understanding informs adaptive, responsive, and preventive support provided by the CLSWW.

The CLSWW play a key role in supporting children and community members throughout this process. Roles and competencies must reflect this, and capacity development should promote positive, respectful engagement between the CLSWW and community members. Whenever possible, include foundational competencies outlined in Table 7: *List of Key Competencies*, particularly the ones related to *Build trust with children and community member*, *Address power disparities and promote inclusiveness*, and *Assess harms to children and community resources*. Participatory learning tools from *Seeds Common Approach Toolkit* can contribute to context analysis.

LINKING COMPETENCES TO THE ROLES OF THE CLSWW

Once CLSWW roles are defined, **identify and tailor the required competencies to match those roles.** Competencies must reflect local needs, challenges, and capacity. Lessons learned show that competencies are often unclear or misaligned. Clearly articulating them ensures relevance and provides a foundation for training and supervision. Select role-specific competencies from the provided list, contextualizing them as needed. Foundational competencies should always be included to support respectful, empathetic, and inclusive engagement with children and communities.

Table 7: List of Key Competencies

Responsibilities	Key Competencies
Foundational (all the CLSWW are expected to have)	
Build trust with children and community members	- Understand social norms and conventions related to communication, both verbal and non-verbal—such as how respect is demonstrated, which topics may be considered taboo, and who is permitted to speak about certain subjects. - Explain the CLSWW roles including the limits of their responsibility in a culturally appropriate manner. - Treat children, families, and community members with humility and respect. - Communicate using culturally appropriate language, posture, gestures, and facial expressions. - Communicate with children and young people using age-appropriate language and child-friendly approaches.

	- Listen attentively and respectfully to understand, rather than to evaluate or challenge. - Demonstrate empathy toward children, families, and community members, by taking their perspectives, recognizing their emotions, and reflecting those emotions in communication.
Address power disparities and promote inclusiveness	- Understand the community's culture and the distribution of power among its members. - Observe who participates in community decision-making processes, who does not, and how they interact with one another. - Be sensitive to gender dynamics and their impact on community interactions. - Develop strategies to include marginalized groups, such as adolescent girls and children with disabilities. - Facilitate children's meaningful and ethical participation. - Be sensitive to and effectively manage non-violent conflict, fostering constructive dialogue and resolution.
Assess harms to children and community resources (child protection risk and protective factors)	- Listen deeply to fully understand the perspectives, concerns, and needs expressed by children, families, and community members. - Ask respectful and open questions to understand the perspectives, concerns, and needs expressed by children, families, and community members. - Observe children's and families' circumstances, including their interactions with family members, other adults, and peers within the community. - Recognize potential threats, violations, and vulnerabilities affecting children. - Appreciate existing community resources, strengths, and capacities in child protection. - Map and build connections with locally available support and service providers to ensure appropriate assistance for children.
Cultivate growth and development individually and as a group	- Understand and clearly articulate the roles of the CLSWW including the limits of their responsibility and authority. - Think openly and honestly about what works well, what does not, and why, in working with children, families, and community members. - Recognize personal strengths and areas for growth in working with children, families, and community members, taking steps to learn and adapt, as needed. - Apply creative and critical thinking to come up with effective and practical solutions to problems. - Engage with others to refine and improve solutions and overcome challenges together. - Dedicate oneself to continuous learning to acquire new knowledge and skills, and demonstrate a willingness to apply them in practice. - Know how to manage stress and prioritize self-care and wellbeing. - Foster a positive, "can-do" attitude within the team and community.
Keep children and communities we work for / with safe and protected	- Understand and embed safeguarding and PSEAH policies, concepts, and approaches in all aspects of work. - Refer situations of concern in accordance with safeguarding procedures. - Recognize when behavior (of self and others) falls below expected standards and take appropriate action. - Influence others to adopt and uphold appropriate safeguarding practices. - Maintain confidentiality in all aspects of work, ensuring sensitive information is handled appropriately.

Adaptable (they have to be adapted to the context or the project, based on the relevancy)	
Enhance and systematize the existing capacity in child protection in and around the community	- Clearly communicate risk and protective factors in the community in a manner that is accessible and appropriate for both children and community members. - Facilitate open, inclusive dialogues that enable community members to together explore and identify ways to enhance child protection within the community. - Facilitate opportunities for children to express their views and make informed decisions on matters that affect them. - Understand how children think and feel at different stages of development. - Recognize how developmental stages influence children's behavior, emotions, and needs. - Understand where and how to contact other members of the child protection mechanisms, if any. - Know how to access relevant formal and informal support and services for children and families. - Map and build connections with other professionals, groups, and organizations, including active participation in coordination meetings.
Strengthen families and promote family-based care	- Plan and carry out home visits in a culturally appropriate, respectful, and sensitive manner, ensuring the comfort and dignity of children and families. - Convey clear information to parents, caregivers, and other extended family members on positive parenting practices. - Recognize and raise awareness of the harmful impact of institutionalization on children. - Understand the role of alternative care and the common challenges associated with it. - Work with at-risk families to ensure children's basic physical, social, and emotional needs are met, leveraging available community resources. - Apply knowledge to respond effectively to the specific needs of unaccompanied and separated children in humanitarian contexts. - Conduct sensitive, child-friendly interviews with unaccompanied and separated children, caregivers, and community members (individually) to gather accurate information for family tracing and reunification. - Recognize the psychosocial impact of family separation and provide or refer children and families to appropriate support and services. - Support care-takers in providing a safe, nurturing, and stable environment for children in alternative care, where necessary.
Prevent and mitigate specific child protection risks	- Respectfully and gradually address harmful and discriminatory norms and practices within families and communities to protect children. - Collect and organize information on specific child protection risks, as well as available support and services, in a child- and community-friendly manner. - Establish communication channels to disseminate relevant information on child protection risks to the community. - Mobilize peer and community support, drawing upon local networks for collective learning about the prevention of specific child protection risks. - Demonstrate strong organizational skills to effectively arrange meetings, coordinate activities, and manage logistics. - Customize sessions focused on preventing and mitigating specific child protection risks. - Clearly communicate and effectively facilitate group discussions to encourage active participation in awareness-raising sessions and other community dialogues on prevention.

	- Adapt and adjust facilitation strategies on an ongoing basis to ensure engagement and understanding. - Make safe, timely referrals to social service providers and connect families/children to relevant community support and services to reduce vulnerabilities, such as education, health, nutrition, and livelihoods.
Respond to specific child protection risks	- Recognize signs of harm experienced by individual girls and boys at risk and understand how to prioritize actions and when to take them. - Respond to disclosures of all forms of abuse, including child survivors of SGBV, in a sensitive, supportive, appropriate, and safe manner. - Ensure that children feel heard, believed, and safe while communicating with at-risk children. - Demonstrate skills in basic psychological first aid. - Make safe and timely referrals to appropriate case management actors (government and CSO social workers and caseworkers) in line with the community-level referral pathway, ensuring high-risk children are prioritized. - Discuss the needs of children and caregivers, identifying the appropriate and available support and services necessary to address their safety and wellbeing. - Collaborate with service providers and key community members / groups to mobilize support for children experiencing violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect, in a safe and appropriate manner. - Demonstrate a strong understanding of the confidentiality principle. - Identify and assess available agencies, organisations and services as initial steps in developing community-level referral pathways. - Sensitize service providers on safe identification and referrals and their roles.
Champion children's voices in advocacy and influencing (promotive function)	- Engage children and youth respectfully through safe, inclusive verbal communication. - Integrate children's perspectives into advocacy and decision-making processes. - Facilitate meaningful child participation in community-level advocacy initiatives.
Contribute to humanitarian assistance	- Remain attentive and responsive to the changing needs of children, families, and communities affected by humanitarian crises. - Demonstrate flexibility in supporting the delivery of humanitarian assistance in alignment with government requirements or project objectives. - Coordinate effectively with relevant formal and informal agencies managing or involved in emergency response. - Demonstrate a basic understanding of the Core Humanitarian Principles and Child Protection Minimum Standards and ensure they are embedded in all actions. - Integrate appropriate child protection prevention and response actions as part of broader humanitarian efforts.
Promote emergency preparedness and anticipatory actions	- Be prepared for unexpected situations and challenges, and support others in their preparedness. - Leverage one's knowledge and experience working with vulnerable children, families and communities to ensure emergency preparedness and anticipatory action planning efforts will effectively serve such populations.

	- Take on and strengthen the existing roles such as prevention and community mobilization, recognizing that these efforts can enhance overall emergency preparedness and anticipatory action planning and implementation.
Others	*CO teams will add any competencies as deemed relevant.*

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND SELECTION

Once roles and competencies are defined, **develop selection criteria in collaboration with community members, government, and CSO actors** involved in CLSWW strengthening. In contexts where the CLSWW and their eligibility criteria already exist, make appropriate adjustments if needed. This helps ensure selected individuals have the right attributes and motivation to support children and communities effectively. Key criteria to consider include:

- **Personal qualities**: Candidates should be motivated to serve the community and able to engage with diverse groups in a friendly, calm, and patient manner. Integrity, honesty, openness to reflection, a commitment to safeguarding, and willingness to learn are essential.
- **Relevant experience**: Experience in community engagement, especially with children, is important. If the CLSWW are expected to support case management, candidates should ideally have 2–3 years of child protection experience. Where this is not feasible, those with strong community-level and childcare experience may be considered.
- **Language and literacy**: The CLSWW should speak the local language. Literacy requirements depend on the role—written reports may not always be necessary. In many contexts, skills in verbal communication with children and families are more relevant to the CLSWW roles.

The CLSWW should have a basic understanding of child protection and community engagement, along with additional topics relevant to their specific roles. Other criteria may include living in the target community, endorsement by community members, or specific characteristics (e.g., minority status or gender). All candidates must have no criminal record or concerns regarding their suitability to work with children. Where feasible, a reference check from relevant community members should be obtained to help validate the candidate's suitability.

Spotlight on practice: Eligibility criteria in Mali and Cote d'Ivoire

In Mali, the criteria are 'acceptable to local community', motivated to work on child protection, have the time necessary, have lived in the community for at least ten years, and have no criminal records specifically related to cases of violence or abuse of children. In Cote d'Ivoire, the only criterion is 'community approval.' While broad criteria can help ensure promising CLSWW candidates aren't excluded, overly vague criteria may result in selecting individuals who later prove unable to meet the role's requirements. See Table 4: *Eligibility Criteria for CLSWW* in the synthesis report (page 49 - 50) for more examples.

All of the above information should inform the development of job descriptions, which serves as the basis for CLSWW recruitment and capacity development. Job descriptions should include the following key elements:

- **Job Profile**: A brief explanation of the purpose of the role, focusing on child protection and community engagement.
- **Roles and Responsibilities**: A clear and detailed description of the tasks and duties associated with the role, ensuring alignment with community needs and existing systems.
- **Competencies**: The essential skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to perform the role effectively, based on the identified responsibilities.

- **Eligibility Criteria**: The key qualifications, experiences, and personal attributes required for selection, ensuring that the right individuals are engaged.
- **Working Conditions**: Specific details on working hours, remuneration, compensation for expenses, and workforce organization to ensure sustainability and effectiveness.

The attached *Roles/Responsibilities and Competencies for the CLSWW* can also be used to ensure alignment between roles and competencies. Job descriptions should be communicated in the local language and in a child- and community-friendly manner to ensure clear understanding among the CLSWW and community members. Refer to Annex 4: *Job Descriptions* as a sample template to develop or strengthen contextually appropriate job descriptions for the CLSWW.

Recruitment processes must be fair and transparent, based on the candidate's ability to meet the role's demands. Where appropriate, involving community members and children in identifying and selecting the CLSWW can foster ownership and strengthen trust. Where the CLSWW already exist, efforts should focus on strengthening their roles, which may require additional support and training.

DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING APPROPRIATE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Develop the capacity strengthening plans based on the competencies identified for the roles. A range of strategies—such as formal training, refresher courses, peer learning workshops, and on-the-job training with skilled supervision—should be applied systematically and in alignment with the competencies.

The table below outlines example training programs and resources linked to specific competencies. Where possible, these should be structured progressively to help the CLSWW build competencies step by step. For well-established CLSWW, capacity strengthening may focus on filling gaps and providing mentoring. For newly recruited CLSWW, a more comprehensive phased training program will be needed.

Table 8: Examples of training programs linked to particular competencies

Responsibilities	Examples of training programs / technical resources
Foundational or Generic (all the CLSWW are expected to have)	
Build trust with children and community members	- *Seeds*[6] soft skills training (being humble, deep listening, showing empathy)
Address power disparities and promote inclusiveness	- *Seeds* soft skills training (supporting inclusive processes, managing non-violent conflict, enabling children's meaningful participation)
Assess harms to children and community resources (risk factors and protective factors)	- *Seeds* soft skills training (asking probing questions) - Adapted tools for participatory learning used for *Seeds* Phase 2 (Learning Phase)
Cultivate growth and development individually and as a group	- The Well-being Cards - MHPSS Hub

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[6] Seeds is Save the Children and War Child Alliance's common approach to community-led child protection.

Keep children and communities we work for / with safe and protected	- Safeguarding Training (SCI) https://www.savethechildrenlearning.org/totara/program/view.php?id=60
Enhance and systematize the existing capacity in child protection in and around the community	- Adapted tools for participatory learning and planning used for Seeds Phase 2 (Learning Phase) and 3 (Action Planning Phase) - Community Ownership Reflection Workshop https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/community-ownership-reflection-workshop-guide-eng.pdf
Strengthen families and promote family-based care	- Bronze Course: Safe Families Common Approach https://www.savethechildrenlearning.org/course/view.php?id=415 - Simplified version of the family strengthening session under the S2P training - Positive parenting tips on the Safe Families Common Approach Parenting without Violence Key Messages.pdf
Prevent and mitigate specific child protection risks	- *Messages for Children, Caregivers and Communities on the Care and Protection of Children During Humanitarian Crises.* Save the Children (2025) - Bronze Course: Safe Schools Common Approach https://www.savethechildrenlearning.org/login/index.php - MHPSS key message bank for children and families in emergencies https://www.mhpss.net/toolkit/undefined/resource/mhpss-key-message-bank-for-children-and-families-in-emergencies - MHPSS key messages for adolescents Key Messages for Adolescents - MHPSS Hub
Respond to specific child protection risks	- Safe Recognition and Referrals of Child Protection Concerns: Rapid guide for all humanitarian workers Safe Recognition and Referrals of Child Protection Concerns: Rapid guide for all humanitarian workers	Global Child Protection Area of Responsibility - Safe Recognition and Referral Training for Frontline Humanitarian Staff (Save the Children, 2025) 1. SRR Training Manual for Facilitators.docx - Bronze Course: Steps to Protect Common Approach https://www.savethechildrenlearning.org/course/view.php?id=28 - Psychological First Aid for Children on Kaya https://kayaconnect.org/course/view.php?id=1992 - Community Child Protection Volunteers Training Manual (Alliance for CPHA, 2021)

	https://alliancecpha.org/en/community_volunteers
	- GBV Pocket Guide
	https://gbvguidelines.org/en/pocketguide/
	- The First Steps to Protect (to be completed)
Champion children's voices in advocacy and influencing (promotive function)	- Fun, Safe, Inclusive: a half day training module on facilitation skills
	https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/facilitator_14594_rb _fun_safe_and_inklusive_web_final.pdf/
	- Child Development Training on Kaya
	https://kayaconnect.org/course/view.php?id=2072#section-1
Contribute to humanitarian assistance	- Training on Child Protection Minimum Standards
	https://kayaconnect.org/course/info.php?id=3566
	- We Thrive Integrated Package
	https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/we-thrive-integrated-package
Promote emergency preparedness and anticipatory actions	- Child Protection in Anticipatory Action: Briefing Note, Matrix of Actions and Relevant Resources (Save the Children, 2024)
	https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/child-protection-in-anticipatory-action-briefing-note

* Please note that some of the Save the Children resources referenced in this section may not be publicly accessible to external stakeholders. Other agencies are therefore encouraged to review whether they have similar internal resources, tools, or guidance that may be more appropriate for their context, and, where possible, to ensure complementarity with materials developed by Save the Children and other agencies.

Effective capacity development for the CLSWW requires coordinated planning among child protection actors, leveraging existing mechanisms and shared resources. One-off trainings by individual organizations have limited impact; instead, collaborative, step-by-step programs aligned with defined competencies are recommended. Training should be focused, practical, and respectful of CLSWW time—many are volunteers. It should build on existing materials and include opportunities for ongoing learning through technical supervision and peer exchange. Avoid information-heavy sessions; participants should leave with practical skills as well as actionable plans.

Spotlight on practice: Systematic Capacity Development in Uganda

Uganda has demonstrated leadership in standardizing the CLSWW through the establishment of Para Social Workers (PSWs) under the 2020 Child Policy. A nationally endorsed training manual, revised in 2025 by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, ensures PSWs are equipped with core competencies to support vulnerable populations. The two-phase training approach—pre-service and in-service—combines classroom learning, field practicum, and competency-based assessments, and promoting continuous learning. Community-based selection and endorsement of over 4,000 PSWs further reinforces trust, making Uganda a model for structured and scalable capacity development (see Annex 5 for the outline of the training module).

TECHNICAL SUPERVISION

Ensure all CLSWW receive ongoing technical supervision to support their capacity development, self-care, and wellbeing. Supervision should foster reflective practice, helping the CLSWW recognize achievements, identify gaps, and promote safe, quality support for children and communities. Providing a safe space for self-expression also helps the CLSWW cope with stress. Please see more guidance for Annex 6: *Do's and Don'ts list for supervisors of CLSWW*.

Supervisors should be selected based on the local context, with clearly defined responsibilities. They should also possess the soft skills necessary to build rapport and trust with the CLSWW. Where appropriate, supervision responsibilities can be shared between government entities and child protection agencies. SC is well-positioned to provide technical support by guiding government supervisors or supplementing supervisory roles where needed. Key tips for effective supervision:

- Agree on frequency, duration, and mode of supervision based on the CLSWW's roles and the local context. Supervision does not need to be face-to-face; it can be conducted remotely, such as via phone.
- All workers require regular supervision, including experienced staff. Those working remotely, in highly challenging environments, or handling complex tasks—especially where there are significant risks to children—should receive supervision more frequently.
- Supervision should occur at least once per month, and ideally more often for those supporting case management.
- Supervision can be delivered in groups, individually, or ideally both. Even when group supervision is provided, individual supervision should always be available to allow the CLSWW to discuss sensitive issues confidentially and safely.
- Supervision should be considered a core responsibility of the CLSWW. Time for supervision should be allocated within regular working hours. If the CLSWW receive payment, stipends, or allowances for their work, supervision should be reimbursed similarly. Any costs incurred—such as travel or phone expenses—should also be reimbursed.

ACCREDITATION

Consider introducing a mechanism for accreditation to acknowledge and recognise the roles of the CLSWW, where possible and feasible. Accreditation can serve as a formal means of valuing the contributions of the CLSWW. It can also enhance advocacy efforts, provide impetus for increased resource allocation, and build a more motivated workforce. Where appropriate and relevant, work in partnership with a third-party organization that specializes in assessment and accreditation, or—if available—a professional body within the country that plays a role in accrediting the social services workforce, for example, a professional association of social workers. SC partnered with NCFE and the Council for Awards in Care, Health and Education (CACHE) to accredit social services workforce in India and Myanmar, as well as our own global staff through the COMPAQT[7] scheme.

In situations where accreditation is not feasible, alternative measures should be considered and implemented to ensure proper recognition of the CLSWW. This includes conducting a thorough assessment of their capacity and contributions. Assessment should be a regular—typically annual—process that provides space for the CLSWW to reflect on their achievements, identify individual gaps in knowledge and skills, and plan for career progression, where relevant and viable. This process should be fully integrated into capacity development pathways.

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[7] Competency based Professional Approach to Qualifications and Training (COMPAQT) is a recognition scheme that accredits SC staff based on the quality of their day-to-day work and the competencies required for their roles.

Coordination

Ensure coordination with the government and other agencies working to strengthen the CLSWW at national or sub-national levels. In contexts where the government is already engaged, contribute to and reinforce government leadership. Where a child protection coordination mechanism exists, leverage it effectively to support CLSWW strengthening.

In settings where the government is not actively involved, advocate jointly with key child protection actors to encourage government engagement and leadership. In humanitarian contexts, under the CP Coordination body (ex. Protection Cluster) where SC is often actively engaged or leading, structures such as a Case Management Taskforce or Community-Level CP Taskforce may play a key role in strengthening the CLSWW.

Across all contexts, SC should be well-positioned to provide technical leadership to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the CLSWW. Consider leading the development of standardized job descriptions, workforce strengthening plans, capacity development programs, and guidelines for support and services delivered by the CLSWW, along with other tools that can support coordination and collective efforts to strengthen the CLSWW.

Ensure that the CLSWW coordinates support for children with local service providers within the broader child protection system at the local level to ensure safe and ethical referrals. Service mapping information should be updated regularly and be accessible, and service providers should receive ongoing training on child protection, child safeguarding, and gender-sensitive practices. Refer to the new guidance on *Safe Recognition and Referrals of Child Protection Concerns: Rapid Guide for All Humanitarian Workers.*

Sustainability planning / Resource mobilization

Develop a long-term sustainability plan for strengthening the CLSWW at the inter-agency level, in collaboration with the relevant government authority. This plan should include a broader resource mobilization strategy and financial mechanisms to ensure sustained and enhanced support for the CLSWW over the long term.

Support the government and other duty bearers in developing a well-considered and collaborative costed strategy, along with a resource mobilization plan, for strengthening the CLSWW. This should include a plan on how each child protection organization can make contributions. Where possible, advocate for the inclusion of this strategy in national and regional policies and action plans, including action plans for ending violence against children, to secure public funding and donor support for the workforce strengthening.

Where possible, consider undertaking a budget analysis to explore opportunities for strengthening the CLSWW within the broader context of the social welfare workforce. Additionally, pursue opportunities to generate evidence on the effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of the CLSWW to institutionalize the approach. Evidence-informed advocacy will contribute to increased sustainability of the approach and support resource mobilization.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Examples of questions for Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews

Examples of prompt questions to the CLSWW

Roles and responsibilities

o What child protection preventative and response support do you provide for children and their families?
o Who do you support? How are you considering gender, ethnicity, disability, age, and other diversity factors to ensure that the most marginalized children access your child protection support?
o What other formal and informal social services and support are you already working closely with to promote the protection of children? What successes and challenges have you encountered in coordinating with these service providers?
o Are there any support and services that you organize or provide which are not usually considered child protection, such as support for women or the provision of social protection?
o What guiding documents, legal frameworks, policies, national strategies, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) or other resources do you refer to in order to perform your roles? How do you access this information?
o What risks, including security risks, might impact your work while carrying out your roles as a CLSWW? What are measures to mitigate these risks? Who supports you in implementing these measures, how?
o What challenges do you face, including issues related to power dynamics and prevailing social and cultural norms? What are the difficulties in collaborating with local authorities? How do you overcome these challenges?

Note: The roles and responsibilities of the CLSWW differ depending on the context. Simplify or adapt the questions based on the key learning points from the previous step.

Capacity development

o What training programs do you have access to? How are they organised? What topics are covered in the training?
o Who provides technical capacity support for you? Do you have technical supervisors? If so, what is the supervisor-to-worker ratio (i.e., number of the CLSWW to one supervisor)? What are discussed with the supervisor?
o What would you like to learn more about in order to improve your support and services for children and their families? How would you like to learn about these?
o Are there other initiatives in place to properly recognize the work achieved by the CLSWW and motivate them for greater retention? If so, what are they? If no such initiatives exist, what mechanisms or measures could help maintain and enhance your motivation?

Coordination with local support and services

o What social services to support children and families are available at the community and district levels (e.g., education, health, etc.)? Who provides these services?
o How effective are the services delivered at the community level? To what extent are children's care and protection integrated into these services?
o How effectively do you coordinate with these service providers while performing your role?
o Are there people or groups in the community you could work more closely with? For example, is there a village committee, health volunteers, or do teachers already help care for and protect children in families?

Examples of prompt questions to community members and children

It is important to hear from children and families about their experience with the CLSWW—how well it works, what they hope for its future, and how they want to be involved. Understanding their views on traditional practices and social norms is also valuable.

Effectiveness of the work carried out by the existing CLSWW

o   If a CLSWW already exists in the community, how accepted is their work by the community and children? What supports or hinders their work?
o   What child protection preventive and response support does the CLSWW provide for children and their families in the community?
o   Who in the community can access the support provided by the CLSWW, and who faces difficulties in accessing it? What are the reasons for these difficulties?
o   What successes and challenges have you encountered in accessing or observing the support provided by the CLSWW?
o   Are there any additional roles you would like the CLSWW to take on?
o   Who does the CLSWW work closely with when organizing and facilitating support for children and community members? How effective is this coordination?

Existing Child Protection Issues and Solutions

o   What are the issues, risks, and threats faced by children in the community? How do age, gender, and disabilities affect children's experiences?
o   Which groups are marginalized or discriminated against (e.g., minority groups, women and girls, people with disabilities)? To what extent do they have access to the CLSWW's support?
o   What are the traditional practices and beliefs regarding the care and protection of children?
o   What existing ways or structures help care for and protect children? What roles do extended families play? Are there any groups or committees that help solve community problems, including violence against children, and who are they?
o   Who holds power within the communities and is responsible for decision-making (e.g., elders, women in the home)? Is this the same group responsible for decisions related to the care and protection of children? How do the power dynamics affect the roles performed by the CLSWW?

Examples of prompt questions to local government officials / agency staff

It is helpful to hear from formal and informal child protection stakeholders—like local government officials and agency staff—about how well they coordinate with the CLSWW. If they provide technical or administrative support, understanding how they manage this is also important.

Coordination with local support and services

o   What support and services do you provide, and to what extent do you coordinate with the CLSWW?
o   What are the successes and challenges you have faced in working with the CLSWW?
o   What measures can be taken to enhance coordination with the CLSWW?

Capacity development (if they are responsible for the capacity development of the CLSWW)

o   How do you strengthen the CLSWW capacity? What approaches do you use for training and supervision?
o   How do you understand the competencies required for CLSWW roles? How do they align with the support you provide for enhancing their capacity?
o   What challenges do you face in supporting the capacity development of the CLSWW, and how do you address them?

- What initiatives exist to assess the competencies of the workforce, properly recognize their achievements, and motivate them for greater retention? How are these initiatives implemented? If no such initiatives exist, what mechanisms or measures could help maintain and enhance their motivation?

ANNEX 2 – Case study: Assessment findings and action planning, Thailand

For nearly two decades, children in Thailand's Deep South have faced persistent violent conflict, making them among the most vulnerable in the region. With ECHO's support, Save the Children delivered an integrated response, embedding child protection within disaster risk reduction (DRR) systems and strengthening preparedness across communities. The team in Thailand worked to strengthen the CLSWW capacity in child protection and DRR, enabling them to mitigate and respond to risks affecting children.

Strengths

- In Thailand, the Sub-district Administration Office (SAO), under the Ministry of Interior, officially appoints key individuals as members of Sub-district Child Protection Committees. Within these committees, the CLSWW are often the most active participants. They should be technically guided by the Department of Children and Youth (DCY).
- Community volunteers **demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting their communities and children**. They play key roles in meeting basic needs, sharing child protection information, and connecting children in need with appropriate support and services, in coordination with various service providers.
- They **possess in-depth knowledge of the local context**, including the situations of children and families affected by armed conflict.
- The CLSWW is recognized by community members, which helps them **establish and maintain trust** more easily within the community.
- In conflict-affected areas, formal services may be culturally or contextually inappropriate due to language barriers or the attitudes of service providers. Consequently, community members may avoid or distrust these services. In such cases, community volunteers play a vital role in **facilitating access to appropriate informal services**, often organized by local CSOs, that provide quality support or link at-risk individuals to alternative services.

Gaps

- Despite their critical role, the CLSWW lack adequate support. **Their roles and required competencies are not clearly defined.**
- Due to a lack of clarity, the CLSWW may **unintentionally create unrealistic expectations**, with communities anticipating cash or in-kind aid instead of protection and psychosocial support.
- Volunteers **lack access to structured capacity development**, such as phased training and supervision. Current training is ad hoc, depending on the availability of project funding, and not tailored to their roles.
- Traditional gender norms and social beliefs can limit volunteers' ability to address sensitive issues. For example, some female volunteers feel less influential due to community power dynamics.
- **Additional administrative layers in reporting and referral processes among different service providers at various levels (community, district, province etc.) can delay support for children.**
- Without proper training, volunteers may breach confidentiality or cause harm. Reporting sensitive cases, such as gender-based violence, must follow safe and ethical protocols.

Below are the actions currently being implemented to strengthen the CLSWW, based on the weaknesses and gaps identified.

Table 9: Identified Gaps and Recommended Actions for the context of Deep South in Thailand

Critical gaps	Key strategies

Roles and responsibilities / working practice The roles undertaken by the CLSWW are not clearly defined and may not effectively address the child protection needs of children within the community.	In consultation with key stakeholders—including government officials, UNICEF, INGOs/CSOs, CLSWW members, and community representatives—the roles of the CLSWW should be redefined to reflect the specific needs and realities. They build on their strengths while addressing gaps identified in the analysis. Job descriptions should be developed or adapted in collaboration with the DCY. At a minimum, they must clearly outline roles, responsibilities, and required competencies, tailored to the specific functions that CLSWW are expected to perform. Roles should be simplified as much as possible—for example, heavy administrative reporting was identified as a challenge and should be addressed by streamlining structures and tasks. Additionally, the CLSWW should be equipped to navigate power dynamics and advocate for children in a way that does not abruptly disrupt local structures. These expectations should be clearly articulated in the job description.
Capacity development - competency based training The training is provided on an ad hoc basis only.	Adapt capacity development programmes, based on the competencies. The training program can be systematically re-structured around key competencies. The training program is carefully designed to support CLSWW technical capacity development in a step-by-step manner and should be facilitated by trained and experienced practitioners. The competencies should include the ability to navigate power imbalances and address social norms in a contextually and culturally appropriate manner. This requires specific, targeted training to ensure the CLSWW can advocate effectively while respecting local structures and dynamics.
Capacity development - on the job training and supportive supervision There is no established technical supervision in place.	Improve the structure and the quality of technical supervision. Ensure that individual workers have a technical supervisor, who can provide ongoing coaching and mentoring. The technical supervisors should also be equipped with knowledge and skills for providing technical support rather than it being a function of their role (for example as a manager). This may involve developing specific training and support for supervisors as well as careful consideration about how to develop their skills. In Thailand, the technical supervisors should be the Social Workers from the Home for Children and Families, and this will be discussed further with the DCY.
Local referral mechanisms Enhance the local referral mechanisms that address different child protection risks.	The CLSWW are responsible for regularly coordinating and collaborating with key service providers—including health, education, and MHPSS—and for participating in discussions on issue-based referral pathways. Service mapping information must be regularly updated, and based on this, referral pathways should be clearly defined according to the specific issues faced by children. This will enable the CLSWW to effectively support social workers in delivering timely and appropriate services.

ANNEX 3 – ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

Action Plan Template – Strengthening of the CLSWW			
Country / region:			
Date of action planning discussion / agreement:	DD/MM/20YY		
Date of assessment:	DD/MM/20YY - DD/MM/20YY		
Organizations contributing to action planning and implementation:			
Persons completing strategy:			
Objectives & actions *(Link to assessment)*	**Resources**	**Lead / Key stakeholders**	**Review date**
Objective 1: (*state*)			
Action 1: (*Link to objective 1*)			
Action 2: (*Link to objective 1*)			
Action 3: (*Link to objective 1*)			
Objective 2: (*state*)			
Action 1: (*Link to objective 2*)			
Action 2: (*Link to objective 2*)			
Action 3: (*Link to objective 2*)			
Objective 3: (*state*)			
Action 1: (*Link to objective 3*)			
Action 2: (*Link to objective 3*)			
Action 3: (*Link to objective 3*)			

ANNEX 4 – Sample Job Descriptions

Job descriptions should be tailored to the context where the CLSWW operates. Here is an example adapted from the "Para-Social Worker" role as applied in certain contexts. It outlines the purpose of the role, key responsibilities, and required competencies.

Title – Para-Social Worker (PSW) *This should be contextualize as needed.*
Role Purpose
The PSW is responsible for preventing and responding to violence against children at the community level. They work with local leaders, key individuals, and service providers to mobilize community support for prevention. Their role includes identifying children in need, conducting basic assessments, and connecting them to services and community resources—working closely with caseworkers.
Reports to: The government social worker or NGO caseworker
Responsibilities

Responsibility	Task
1. Creating a foundation to promote community-level child protection	Analyse the risks and vulnerabilities that affect the protection of children within the community.
	Identify community resources, such as support and services, that can enhance the protection of children in the community.
	Effectively coordinate and collaborate with support and service providers within and outside the community to strengthen child protection efforts.
2. Helping communities to prevent violence against children, abuse, exploitation, and neglect	Collaborate with communities to develop and implement preventative actions, leveraging their existing capacity.
3. Recognizing and responding to the needs of individual children experiencing violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect	Step 1a: Recognize girls and boys who are at risk of or experiencing violence, neglect, abuse, and exploitation.
	Step 1b: Consult with supervisors to decide on the level of risk faced by children (high, medium, or low).
	Step 1c: Refer high and medium risk level cases to caseworkers and follow up as requested by them.
	(Steps 2 – 6 apply when the risk level is low.)
	Step 2: Assess family and child strengths and risks, and jointly plan to improve the child's safety and wellbeing.
	Step 3: Support the child and family in accessing support and services through referrals and information sharing. Conduct regular home visits to ensure the family environment is safe and nurturing for children.
	Step 4: Follow up to review whether the support has reduced risks and improved wellbeing.

	Step 5: In consultation with the supervisor and child/family close the case when the child feels safe and protected.
5. Professional Development	Participate in training aligned with identified skill needs in the competency framework.
	Attend one to one / peer supervision and reflective sessions.

Competencies (Required Skills and Attitudes)

- Treat children, families, and community members with humility and respect.
- Communicate using culturally appropriate and child friendly language, posture, gestures, and facial expressions.
- Listen attentively and respectfully to understand, rather than to evaluate or challenge.
- Demonstrate empathy toward children, families, and community members.
- Ask respectful and open questions to understand the perspectives, concerns, and needs expressed by children, families, and community members.
- Observe children's and families' circumstances, including their interactions with family members, other adults, and peers within the community.
- Recognize potential threats, violations, and vulnerabilities affecting children.
- Appreciate existing community resources, strengths, and capacities in child protection.
- Map and build connections with locally available support and service providers.
- Facilitate open, inclusive dialogues that enable community members and children to together explore and identify ways to enhance child protection within the community.
- Apply creative thinking to come up with effective and practical solutions to problems.
- Recognize signs of harm experienced by individual girls and boys at risk and understand how to prioritize actions and when to take them.
- Respond to disclosures of all forms of abuse, including child survivors of SGBV, in a sensitive, supportive, appropriate, and safe manner.
- Make safe and timely referrals to appropriate case management actors, ensuring high-risk children are prioritized.
- Discuss the needs of children and caregivers, identifying the appropriate and available support and services necessary to address their safety and wellbeing.
- Collaborate with service providers and key community members / groups to mobilize support for at-risk children, in a safe and appropriate manner.
- Convey clear information to parents, caregivers, and other extended family members on positive parenting practices.
- Understand and embed safeguarding policies, concepts, and approaches in all aspects of work.
- Maintain confidentiality in all aspects of work, ensuring sensitive information is handled appropriately.

Eligibility Criteria (Qualifications and Experience)

- Experience in community / voluntary work (ideally in child protection)
- An active member of the community: leadership in the community; person trusted by children in his/her community; strong connection with the community
- Flexibility to work in ways that accommodate the availability and needs of children and community members (time and location etc.).
- Proficiency in local language. At a minimum, a basic level of reading and writing skills

Date reviewed: DD/MM/20YY

ANNEX 5 – Systematic Capacity Development in Uganda

The Government of Uganda made a significant move towards standardizing the approach to and roles of the CLSWW. Prior to the adoption of the Child Policy by the Government of Uganda in 2019, the CLSWW was primarily project driven. At district and sub-district level, approaches would vary depending on which donor was supporting what project. UNICEF was, for example, supporting Child Protection Committees, World Bank was supporting Village Case Managers focusing on Gender Based Violence (GBV) and USAID was supporting community volunteers focusing on orphans and vulnerable children (OVC).

The adoption of the Child Policy in 2020 called for the establishment of Para Social Workers (PSW) at community level, with roles and responsibilities broad enough to support all types of child protection issues, as well as support for other vulnerable groups. Child protection actors supporting the Government of Uganda on child protection systems strengthening were then encouraged to support the roll out of PSWs. This included clear parameters for appointment of PSWs, their roles and responsibilities as well as a standardized training package.

The Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) developed a revised edition (first was developed in 2012 and most recent revision in 2025) of *the Training Manual for Para Social Workers* to equip PSWs with critical knowledge and skills that strengthen their ability to provide comprehensive care and support to vulnerable populations within a family-based framework and approach. The curriculum covers values, skills and key competencies required for PSWs to provide quality child protection and social welfare services at the community level. This includes discussions on PSWs evolving role, the attitudes that positively contribute to child and family wellbeing, child protection, issues of gender-based violence (GBV), child survival and health, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and positive parenting, community case management, community mobilization and advocacy and personal growth and development.

To date approximately 4,000 PSWs have been appointed by the community, supported by UNICEF, Baobab Consortium of Population Council, Work Vision and Save the Children. Of these, Save the Children, has supported their establishment in 15 districts with a total of 1,054 (573 male, 481 female) PSWs trained.

 The 2 training phases are as below.

Phase	Actions
Phase 1: Pre-service training	All PSWs must complete one month of standardized generalist PSW training (including 1 week in field) as set out by the MGLSD. For one to be a PSW they should score a minimum of 70% from the training post test and should also have an annual certificate of good standing provided by the Community Development Officer of the sub county or division where they work. 20 days training in the PSW curriculum that includes, • 10 days of face-to-face in-house training facilitated by the ToTs • 5 days field practicum supervised by the ToTs • 5 days face-to-face in-house training facilitated by the ToTs The modules covered include: 1. The role of PSWs 2. Defining community case management 3. Childcare & protection

	4. Child survival & health
	5. Mental Health, Psychosocial Support and Positive parenting
	6. Case management skills
	7. Self-care
	8. Strategies for sustaining the PSW workforce
Phase 2: In-service training	In-service training: Each district CDO shall ensure that every year, PSWs have access to at least 15 total hours of refresher training on social service-related topics. This is a competency-based training follows the below steps: ● Competency based assessment for the PSWs using a competency framework; ● Development of a capacity building plan to address the competency areas that require improvement; and ● Competency based trainings organized as per the capacity building plan.

ANNEX 6 – Do's and Don'ts list for supervisors of the CLSWW

Supervisors of the CLSWW play a vital role in ensuring that community-level child protection efforts are safe, effective, and sustainable. Supervision in this context is not about control—it's about supporting, developing, and protecting those who protect children.

The CLSWW and their supervisors should jointly determine the frequency, duration, and mode of supervision based on roles and local context. Supervision can be remote (e.g., phone) and ideally includes both one-on-one and group sessions. Individual meetings offer a safe space for reflection and problem-solving, while group sessions foster peer learning through shared experiences. At minimum, supervision should cover: (1) what is working well, (2) what challenges exist and why, and (3) what can be improved to strengthen CLSWW functioning.

The following Do's and Don'ts offer practical guidance to help supervisors foster trust, promote wellbeing, and strengthen the technical and emotional capacity of CLSWWs through reflective, ethical, and inclusive supervision.

Do's for the CLSWW Supervisors

- Establish and strengthen trust through consistent, respectful engagement
- Create a safe space for reflection and emotional wellbeing.
- Listen to the CLSWW attentively and carefully.
- Encourage the CLSWW to share their thoughts and perspectives openly and honestly.
- Prioritize what the CLSWW wants to discuss, rather than focusing only on what you want to communicate.
- Recognize and encourage CLSWW contributions and strengths to maintain motivation, rather than focusing only on challenges or gaps.
- Help the CLSWW solve the problems to improve their support for the community.
- Engage in a discussion on why building trust with community members is essential and explore practical ways to achieve it.
- Provide clear communication and be transparent and honest.
- Consider longer-term development of the CLSWW, not the short-term fixes.
- Ensure safety—both physical and emotional—for the CLSWW and the communities they serve.
- Promote self-care and normalize feelings related to challenging community work.
- Respect confidentiality.

Don'ts for the CLSWW Supervisors

- Don't be judgemental.
- Don't offer advice as commands—support problem-solving instead.
- Don't expect to have all the answers—facilitate learning and reflection.
- Don't ignore boundaries—model and reinforce healthy professional limits.
- Don't treat supervision as a one-off task—make it regular and responsive.
- Don't confuse supervision with control—focus on support and development.

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