

# LES TABLES RONDES

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Le travail social dans le monde arabe et au Liban, une diversité d'acteurs

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## The Profession of Social Work in MENA Region: Its Current state, Opportunities and Challenges

UNICEF's Goal Area 3 of the strategic plan seeks to ensure that every girl and boy is protected from violence and exploitation. The plan recognizes the importance of a strong social service workforce (SSW) in reaching this key child protection strategy. The SSW supports children and families in communities in a variety of ways, playing a key role in preventing and responding to violence against children and strengthening families. Strengthening the SSW is critical to ensuring that the frontline can identify and address the multiple forms of violence against children. This study ultimately helps address the question of whether governments currently have the capacity to address the needs of vulnerable children and families with the current SSW, and if not, will help identify approaches to fill gaps.

My presentation is based on the results of a survey that was conducted in 8 MENA region countries, namely, Djibouti, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan and Tunisia. The presentation highlighting the unique aspects of the SSW in each of the nine countries studied. The survey/presentation findings highlight the common challenges or trends that may inform evidence-based strategies those countries may consider when developing their country-level action plans.

More specifically, its objectives are to:

- Provide a basic overview of the context for workforce strengthening, including supportive legislation and policies, financial resources, information management systems, availability of different levels of education and training including field placements, the existence and role of professional associations, and existence of regulatory bodies that establish licensing, standards and/or a professional code of ethics;
- Provide data at the national and subnational (where possible) levels on the workforce itself, including numbers of workers by cadre and employer, their roles and functions, and vacancy rates;
- Assess workers' perceptions of challenges and opportunities,

- including work environment, supervision, job satisfaction, on-going professional development, career paths and aspirations and their recommendations for improvements; and
- Identify implications for SSW strengthening based on national and regional analysis.

The presentation contends that as a profession, social work in the region is still -with some variations between countries- a profession in the making and that as it stands at the moment is more of a workforce than being a full-fledged profession not merely when compared to the situation of the profession in other areas of the world but also when compared to other professions within the region itself.