MSF | MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

Family Service Centre Code of Social Work Practice

Group Work Practice Guide

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FORWARD

Group work is a methodology for practitioners to help individual clients attain their goals in a group setting. It can be regarded as a problem-solving measure to encourage individuals with similar concerns to develop solutions together, as well as to learn from each other. Group work can also be instrumental for social change as people come together and mobilise resources to create a more supportive environment for themselves and others.

The guide is written primarily for novice group work practitioners. It is pragmatic in nature and aims to provide practitioners with the necessary structure and tools to plan, execute and evaluate group work. This guide however, does not stipulate skills and techniques used to conduct group work though we recognise that this is a significant part of the group work process.

In developing the guide, extensive consultations were conducted with members of the Family Service Centre (FSC) sector. A workgroup comprising FSC sector leaders and practitioners developed the guide through months of extensive discussions and literature reviews to ensure that its contents are relevant and informed by empirical evidence. The guide is intended to inform group work in broad strokes, as we recognise that there should be practice space for FSCs to innovate and experiment new ways to meet the community needs.

We are grateful to STARA Consulting, Australia for studying the group work practice conducted in FSCs and shaping the first draft of the guide. We would also like to extend our thanks to Dr Vincent Ng, Mr Mohd Fareez, Ms Natalie Lim and Mr Low Mun Heng from Ang Mo Kio Community Services, Mr Manivannan Ponnusamy from SINDA FSC, Mr Gerard Matthews from Serangoon Moral FSC, Ms Petrine Lim and Ms Joanne Tan from Fei Yue Community Services and Mr Christopher Chiam and Ms Michelle Wong from Care Corner Singapore Ltd, for committing their time and resources to the Group Work Implementation Work Group and seeing the guide to its completion.

CHAPTER 1 OVERVIEW

Purpose and Use of the Practice Guide

The practice guide provides FSC practitioners with an understanding of group work, its processes and core components in the FSC setting. Recommended forms and templates are also included to facilitate group work planning, implementation and evaluation.

Besides providing a common parameter for FSCs on the conduct of group work, this guide provides guidance on the group work process, staff competency required, supervision, agency strategies, and cross-agency collaboration. We hope that this would then facilitate the use of group work as one of the key intervention strategies at the FSCs alongside other intervention methods, such as casework and community work.

CHAPTER 2 UNDERSTANDING GROUP WORK IN FSCS

Defining FSC Group Work

Group work is a method of social work which helps individuals to enhance their social functioning through purposeful group experiences, and to cope more effectively with their personal problems.

Group work consists of goal-directed activities with small groups of people, aimed at meeting their bio-psycho-socio-emotional needs. A group work activity is directed at both the individual group member and the group as a whole.

Why Group Work?

Group work is highlighted as a core practice for FSC practitioners because:

- Group work is an evidence-based practice that contributes to better outcomes for the group members
- Group work enables group members to learn and apply what they know from the group to other aspects of their lives as well as their interaction with other external systems
- Group members' participation in discussion and learning activities could lead to better coping and solutions to their issues
- Group work can be an intervention alternative for individuals and families who do not require individualised casework service

Characteristics of Group Work

Group work, as an intervention methodology, can exist as part of a larger service or programme. For example, group work could be provided for the children who are attending children's services at an FSC.

Group work is characterised by its purpose, intended outcomes, processes and focus on mutual influence.

- Purpose: Group work has a clear focus to address bio-psycho-socio-emotional needs of a community/or group members, usually facilitated by group work facilitators
- Intended outcome: The desired outcomes for the group members as a result of attending the group work and the means to measure these outcomes should be clearly stated from the start
- Processes: Group work has a pre-group phase and working phase, with time required for planning, group development, performance and evaluation
- Focus on mutual influence: Group work relies on the use of group dynamics and mutual influence to be effective

What constitutes Group Work

A group work in the FSC setting should consist of the following components:

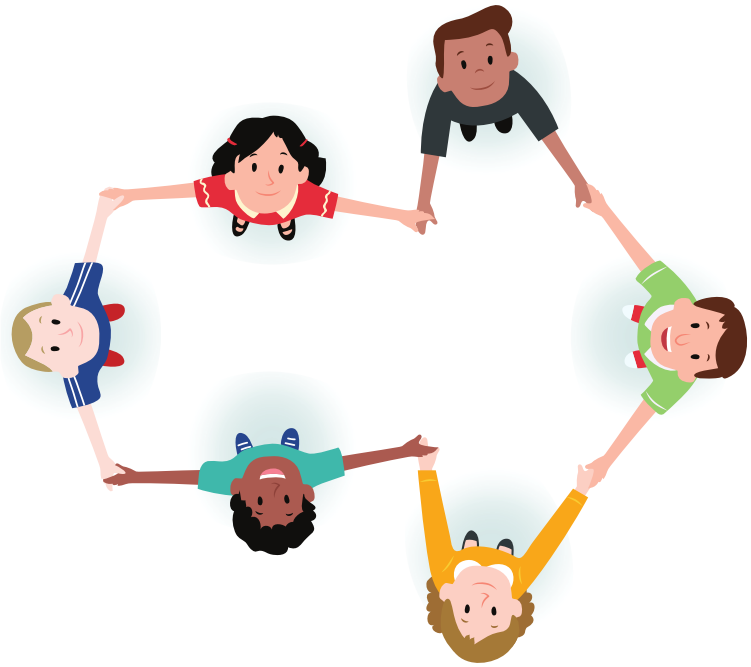
- Needs assessment that informs the emerging and escalating bio-psycho-socio-emotional trends of a community
- Clear intervention plans to help group members attain their goals or address their needs
- Deliberate use of learning activities, group dynamics and relationships to effect change
- Preparation and planning, facilitation and evaluation of the group by group work facilitators and supervisors

Note: In the context of FSCs, groups that are set up to accomplish certain tasks, such as a task group or a work group, but do not address the bio-psycho-socio-emotional issues of its members would not be classified as group work.

The following is an example of what constitutes a group work in an FSC setting:

An FSC runs a children's programme to reach out to children from lower income families. The programme consists of 2 outings (with small group discussions on personal learning in between programme segments), one-to-one befriending services, a series of educational workshops for parents, a 4-week anger management group work for children and family-based casework intervention.

Based on this example, the 4-week group work on anger management and the small group discussion during the outings will be considered as group work conducted.



Priority of Group Work Service and Classification of Group Members

There are two categories of group members in FSC group work:

i. Casework Clients – casework clients form the priority target group to receive group work intervention at the FSC. Group work is used to support existing clients whose needs and issues can be met through group work processes.

ii. Service Users - service users refer to individuals who do not require or may not be known for casework intervention but have presenting bio-psycho-socio-emotional needs. These service users may have come to the attention of the FSC through community work that have been conducted.

The different categories of group members can have implications on pre-group screening processes.

Types of Group Work in FSCs

FSCs need to consider the needs and profiles of their clients, staff's competency level and agency's ability to sustain a group when deciding on the type of group work to develop and facilitate. It is also important to note that group work may involve elements from the various types of groups listed below. In planning, FSCs should determine which of the different types of group is to be adopted in a particular group work they are conducting and allocate resources accordingly.

i. Psycho-Educational Group

A psycho-educational group is formed to address information gaps. Group members' growth comes in the form of increased knowledge about a topic with the aim to bring about behavioural change and/or build insight in managing their issues.

ii. Support Group

A support group emphasises mutual support, comfort and connectedness to others. Group members come together to share their difficulties and coping, through which, they widen their experience and form some level of camaraderie with other group members.

iii. Therapeutic Group

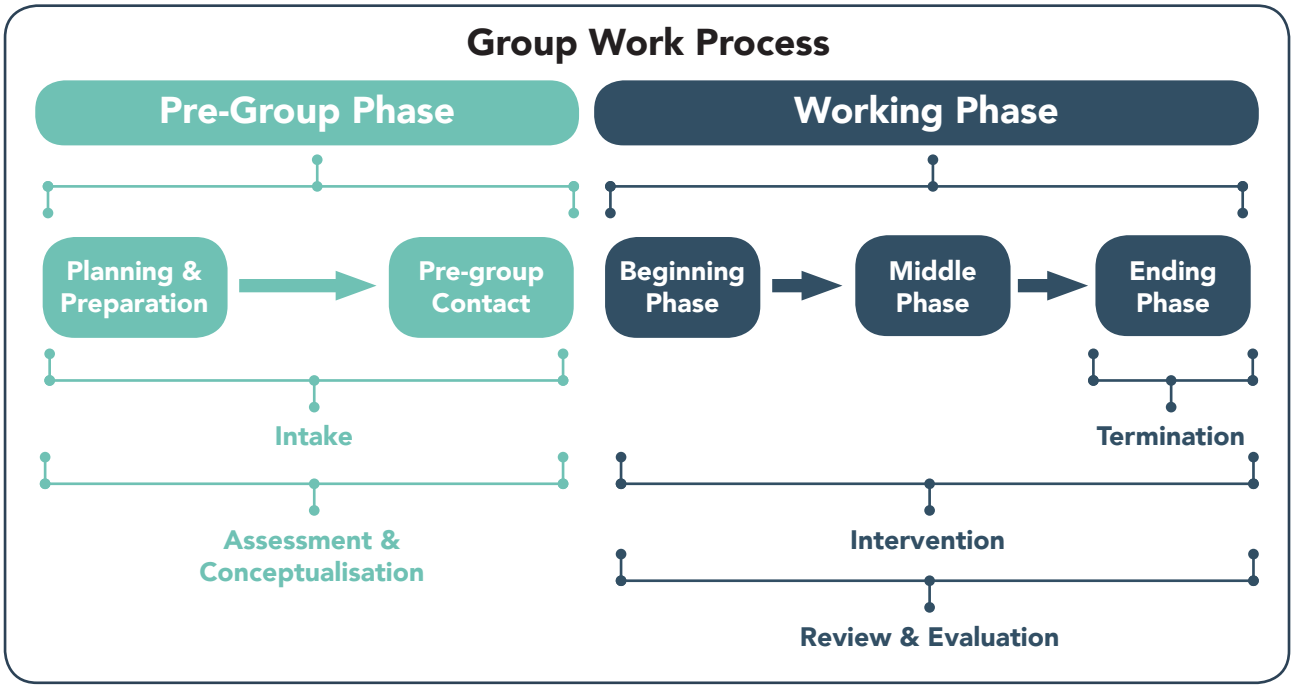
A therapeutic group is a form of treatment group, informed by strong research evidence, and managing more complex bio-psycho-socio-emotional functioning issues. It involves the use of a treatment regime to manage group members' childhood experiences, anti-social behaviours, and specific symptoms such as depression, abuse, anger, grief, and loss etc.

Principles for Group Work Practice

Four key principles undergird professional practice in FSCs:

i. Group Work is Logically Sequenced and Reasoned

Group work practice should have a pre-group phase and a working phase. FSCs should follow a systematic process in strategizing how the group work would be conducted through planning, intake, assessment and conceptualisation, intervention, review and evaluation and termination.



ii. Group Work is a Purposive Practice

The group work is set out to meet the bio-psycho-socio-emotional needs of a community. It requires careful design, facilitation, review, documentation and evaluation.

A purposive group work should be planned for a medium term of 2 to 3 years and there should be sufficient runs to meet the needs of a community.

iii. Group Work is a Theoretically Informed Practice

Group work facilitators are expected to keep abreast of theories, research and existing group work practice in Singapore. There should be considerations of these when designing a group work.

iv. Group Work is part of an Integrated Framework of Practice

FSCs are expected to have an integrated framework of practice where they provide a suite of services - casework, group work and community work as methods of intervention. FSCs will need to deliberate on which of these services are best able to meet the needs of their clients and the community.

When there are casework clients presenting similar needs and/or similar profiles, a group work can be formed to address their common issues. The group work facilitators and caseworkers would need to collaborate closely in creating a continuity between the group work and the casework being conducted. Group work can begin when casework ends, or it can be followed through by casework. Some clients may find themselves moving from casework to group work and then to casework again.

Group work can also be offered to service users who have been engaged by the FSC through their outreach whilst conducting community work.

Group Work Practice Model

Group work practice consists of these core components:

i. Issues to work on

This refers to the broad areas of shared concerns and challenges experienced by the group members, for example, men with aggression issues towards their spouses. Identifying the issue that the group wants to focus on helps the group target pertinent concerns and challenges that group members will have to address during the group work sessions.

ii. Group Members

Group members are casework clients and service users who are participants in a group work. A minimum of 4 group members are needed at the onset of a group work.

iii. Learning Activities

Learning activities are intentional and meaningful activities aimed towards achieving the individual and group goals. While dynamics within the group help determine the success of the group, intentional learning through learning activities is just as important. The lack of meaningful and engaging learning activities can lead to premature dropout or poor satisfaction within the group.

iv. Facilitation and Nurturing

Group work facilitators play a pivotal role in nurturing individual growth, guiding the group towards attaining their goals and facilitating mutual learning among the group members. Effective group work is dependent on the group work facilitator's ability to facilitate and nurture the group, and group members' level of participation.

v. Participation

Group members are expected to actively participate in the group in order for mutual learning to take place. The desire to address issues and challenges form the basis for sustained group membership. Participation may be impacted for groups when group members are involuntary participants. As such, inspiring or ensuring participation through common goals is critical.

vi. Strategy and Support

The FSC's management and Board provide strategic direction and support on the conduct of group work in the organisation.

Group work should be a part of the FSCs' overall strategic plan to ensure that relevant group work is made available to support its community and/or client groups.

vii. Collaboration with community agencies

FSCs should work in collaboration with other stakeholders. Through such collaboration, they can glean expertise and support from professionals across agencies to ensure more sustainable group work service and yield better service delivery to support casework.

viii. Outputs and Outcomes

The overall objective of the group work is to empower group members to increase their knowledge and skills so that they can become more resourceful and resilient in managing the issues at hand.

Output would be represented by the number of group members and activities involved in the group work. Outcomes refer to the changes in attitude, knowledge and skill which should be measured systemically within either a short or longer timeframe.

FSCs are expected to conduct at least 1 group work, preferably with multiple runs, within a financial year. They can be offered in different localities. The group work should address the bio-psycho-socio-emotional needs of existing clients and/or the emerging needs in the community.

Professional Involvement in Group Work

i. Group Work Facilitator to Group Member Ratio

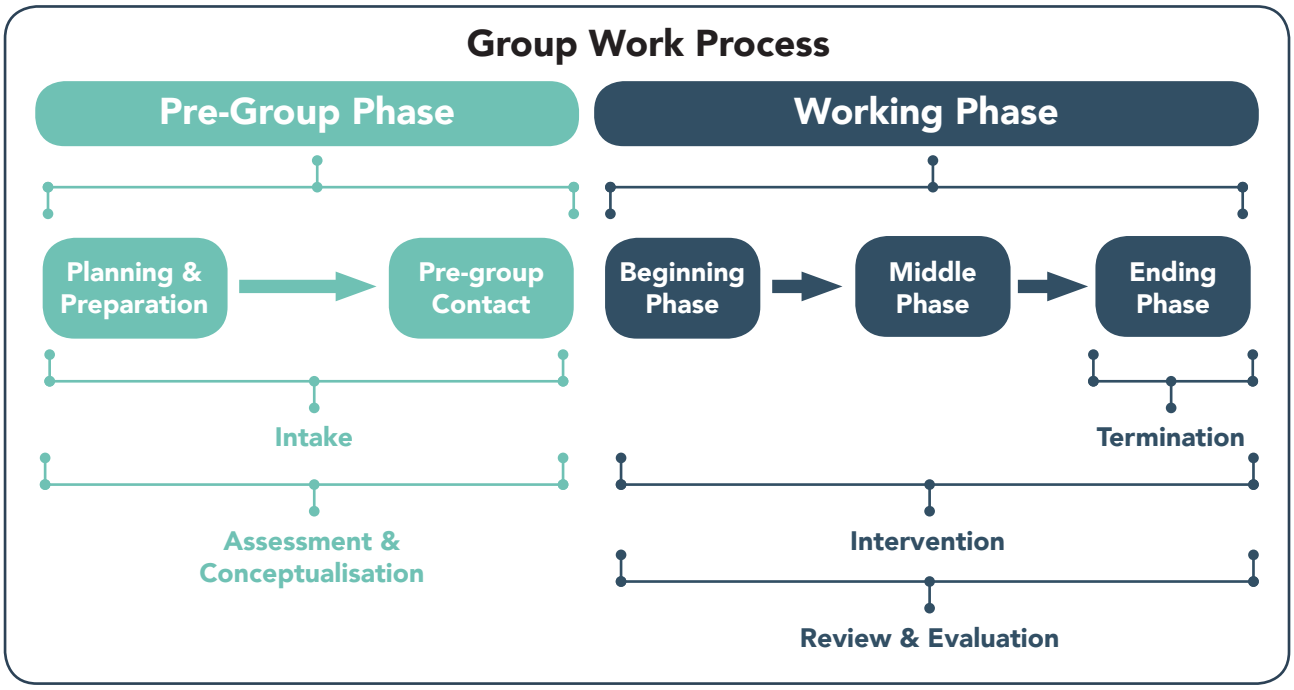
Group work facilitator to group member ratio should preferably be kept at no more than 1:8-12 in order to facilitate healthy group interactions. The less complex the issues and/or profiles of group members, the lower the group work facilitator to group member ratio needed. Where possible, two group work facilitators should be involved in facilitating a group especially when the group size exceeds 12 group members or when the nature of the group requires higher level of contact with group members. Additional co-facilitators, including trained volunteers, can be involved as the number of group members increases.

ii. Personnel Requirements

Taking into account the pre-group and working phase of conducting a group work, FSCs should establish the man-hours required in preparing, executing, evaluating as well as supervising a group. Group work facilitators would be actively involved in designing and executing learning activities, facilitating group work and evaluating outcomes.

There are different types of personnel involved in group work. These personnel would have differing core responsibilities and involvement in different group work types which would then determine the core knowledge and skills they should have. It is important to note that FSCs should allocate experienced personnel with adequate group work knowledge and skills to provide oversight and supervision of group work practice. Please refer to Annex A on the different types of personnel, the core knowledge, skills and responsibilities required for different types of groups.

Group Work Process: Pre-Group Phase



PLANNING & PREPARATION

The planning and preparation phase of group work seeks to ensure that group work is sufficiently planned before its commencement.

i. Needs Assessment

The needs assessment provides the basis for group work to be conducted. It is a systematic process in determining needs. FSCs can conduct a needs assessment by studying the client data base, local community data, literature review and direct interviews with potential group members to identify the needs that exist.

Client Data Base
FSCs can identify prevailing trends through information derived from their casework. The following can be useful sources of information in identifying needs:

- FSC's client profiles
- Information gathered from Enquiry and Intake Assessment forms
- Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual (BPSS) assessment of casework clients who are potential group members for group work
- Clients' genogram, timeline, eco-map and systems diagram
- Identified concerns from the Family and Adult Support Tool (FAST)
- Profiles of clients/families within the different FSC CSWP case classification groups

Local Community Data

Community partners such as the Social Service Offices (SSOs), Members of Parliament and other FSCs can highlight emerging needs. FSCs could take reference from group work services conducted by other agencies which could provide guidance on how to design, plan and evaluate a group work. It is important that FSCs avoid duplication of similar group work services within the same community especially if the number of suitable potential group work members is relatively small.

Literature review

Literature can offer an overview of the latest issues faced by a specific target group, theoretical underpinnings around the issues, key factors contributing to issues, the efficacy of intervention methods or learning activities (what works and what does not work), tools to measure outcomes and limitations of the intervention method chosen.

Interviews with Potential Group Members

Interviews with potential group members can provide an understanding of their needs, motivation of potential group members to attend group work, expected obstacles as well as gain feedback on the group work plan. This process is regarded as a more accurate way to obtain feedback.

ii. Group Work Conceptualisation

Group work conceptualisation seeks to target underlying needs of individual group members and enables group work intervention to be more specific and relevant to the group members' needs. It is the process of forming and clarifying ideas about the conditions/issues faced by the potential group members.

There is the need to identify possible key causes (causal factors) that are contributing to the current situation the group member is in. Group work facilitators may need to identify various causal factors and the resultant outcomes to the various group members in order to address their diverse needs. The outcome factors can be used to shape the group goals. Intervention strategies would be formulated to address the causal factors through the group work.

The use of theories guides an understanding on the issues faced by the group members, which in turn leads to the design of the group work, and how intervention and evaluation would be conducted. Theories is then used to guide the strategies and learning activities throughout the group work process. *A group work targeting on issues of grief and loss faced by the group members, for example, may refer to Kubler-Ross' theory on the 'Stages of grief and loss' to help shape how the group work will be conducted.*

iii. Group Work Proposal

A group work proposal gives an overview of why, what, when, who, whom and how a group work is conducted before a group work commences.

Group work facilitators should seek approval from the Head or a designated person from the agency on the proposal. Please refer to Annex B for a sample of a group work proposal.

iv. Publicity & Recruitment Plan

Publicity and recruitment plans aim to ensure the visibility of the group work and that there are sufficient group members to sustain the group work. It refers to the process of making the information of the group work visible and available to potential group members. Recruitment refers to the process of selecting group members. Given that attrition is normal in group work, group work facilitators should make provisions for this, by recruiting 30 to 50% more than the expected group size.

v. Interagency Collaboration to Facilitate Transfer of Client Information

Interagency collaboration acts as a bridge to facilitate client's access to more services beyond the services provided by the casework agency.

When FSC clients wish to join a group work conducted in another FSC, the agency in charge of the case should provide the agency running the group work with necessary information about the client's need. Where necessary, other information on the case such as the genogram, bio-psycho-social-spiritual assessment and/or a social report and FAST ratings can be forwarded to the agency offering the group work, provided a written consent is provided by the client.

During the process of the group work, there should be constant updates between the caseworker and group work facilitator, about the client's progress, so that they jointly work towards the client's goals.

PRE-GROUP CONTACT

A pre-group contact with the potential group members is meant for the following purposes:

- Screen the potential group members on their suitability to join a group work
- Build rapport with potential group members
- Clarify expectations about the group work
- Assess potential group member's readiness and motivation for group work
- Assess individual potential group member's functioning
- Conduct a preliminary assessment of risk and vulnerability of the potential group members
- Obtain consent from the potential group members to be part of the group
- Manage consent for personal data sharing and clarify the rule on confidentiality

There must be a careful assessment conducted on the potential group members' strengths and resiliency as well as the issue the potential group member is facing, focusing on the context in which problems occur and how the larger environment contributes to these problems.

When making an assessment, the group work facilitators should examine 6 broad aspects of the potential group member's functioning: intrapersonal functioning, interpersonal functioning, caregiver-related stress (where relevant), risk and safety related issues, strengths as well as the environmental impact on individuals.

FSCs should seek written consent from the potential group members with an enclosed written document that informs the potential group members on the limits to confidentiality[1].

There should also be a guide for potential group members when they choose not to be involved in the group work or terminate their involvement whilst being part of the group.

Before the start of the group work, the following information should then be submitted to a group work supervisor for endorsement:

- Screening outcomes based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria for screening purposes, taking into account the individual potential group member's past and present presentation of risk and/or danger to self and others (including mental health and psychiatric history that may put the potential group members or others at risk)
- The Intake Assessment Form (obtained from the caseworker, where available) and additional screening and assessment tools, where appropriate
- Identification of individual goals and group goals
- Consent form on being part of the group work

[1] Limits of confidentiality – issues shared in the course of the group work will be kept confidential unless there are concerns that the group member or others around them are at risk of harm, or if there is a need for the group member to be referred for other services.

Group Process: Working Phase

BEGINNING OF THE WORKING PHASE

At the beginning of a group, the group work facilitator seeks to help group members feel comfortable, so that they could work together collaboratively and actively within the group. This phase may involve the first 1 to 3 sessions or longer for some groups.

i. Clarification of Group Expectations and Group Goals

Group expectations should be clarified with group members at the beginning of a group work, especially how their goals may be met through the group work. Group work facilitators should:

- Provide clarity on the purpose and nature of the group
- Share on the benefits of the group work for the group members
- Clarify on the roles and expected behaviours of group members and group work facilitators
- Set a clear contract on the goals and expected outcomes from the group members

Although some individual goals can be met through group work, group goals tend to be broader than individual goals and hence the group work might not necessarily attain all of the group members' individual goals. *For example, the goal of the group may be to teach coping skills to deal with the loss of a loved one. The individual group member may have the goals of coping with her own grief as well as learning how to support her children through their grief process. As the group goal may not aim to teach individual group members on how to support children in their grief, the individual group member's latter goal would not be met.* Clarity on the expectations by group members on what they could achieve through the group should be set at the start.

Group goals are constructed with an in-depth understanding of the individual goals of members in the group. They reflect the needs of individual group members, the group's intended outcomes and how these outcomes can be measured over time.

Upon assessment of the individual group members' needs and background, group work facilitators should distil the information further by identifying common themes, prioritising them and developing them into group goals.

When formulating the group goals, it is important that group work facilitators set a limit of about 3 to 4 group goals. These goals may also be formulated based on the greatest effect they would have on the group.

Group goals should be phrased in a manner that articulates what group members could attain instead of what group work facilitators could offer. An example of this would be to state the goal as *"Members to cope through their grief without hurting themselves" rather than "Facilitators will teach members ways of coping with their grief in a positive way"*.

Forming SMART goals are key to setting group goals:

- **S**pecific goals are the clearly defined targets. Specific goals guide the group to know if and when their goals are achieved and the types of activities needed to attain the goals
- **M**easurable goals are goals that can be easily measured and tracked at the start of the group work (baseline) and at the end (target) of the group work to ascertain whether the goals have been achieved. How these are measured and evaluated over time is stated
- **A**ttainable goals are small bite-sized goals that can be achieved quite easily through efforts invested by group members
- **R**ealistic goals take into account the capacity and capability of the group members to achieve them
- **T**imely goals schedule the different levels of goal to be attained over time

If group goals are hard to measure or cannot be measured objectively and consistently, the group would need to refine its goals.

ii. Developing a Core Group of Group Members

Core group members comprise of members who have shared values and purposes. The core group should consist of at least three to five group members whom the group work facilitators have earlier assessed could assist in different aspects of the group and could be a positive influence to others.

Peripheral group members will be those who have been assessed to be less committed to the group work. The role of the group work facilitator is to consolidate the core group members and form connections with the peripheral group members to help them feel included and belonged to the group.

iii. Assessing Group Functioning

The objective of conducting an assessment on the group functioning is to ascertain how the group is working together. Group work facilitators are expected to assess the group dynamics in a systematic manner. Minimally, group work facilitators should note the following:

- Group attendance and premature dropouts
- Communication and interactional patterns
- Group cohesion
- Power relationship of individual group members

iv. Learning Activities

Learning activities aim to facilitate learning throughout the working phase of group work. Learning activities can lead to greater retention of what is learned in the group, improve intrapersonal awareness and interpersonal skills, and promote cohesion within a group. Learning activities are purposive to address the individual and group goals. Please refer to Annex C for types of learning activities.

v. Gathering Evaluation

Group work evaluation is an on-going process that aims to assess how group members and the group, as a whole, are progressing towards their individual and group goals. It should include both qualitative and quantitative data.

The objective of conducting regular evaluation is to ensure that group work facilitators and the group members would be informed of their progress throughout their group work involvement.

The processes of monitoring and evaluation start as soon as the group begins. The group work facilitator should carefully note the problems and concerns group members present and work on the tentative group goals so that group members' progress can be monitored and reported back to the group members over time.

Evaluative tools should also be put into place at the start of the group work process. *For example, group work facilitators may use measures at the start of a group as a means of establishing baseline measures of the group members.*

Qualitative Data

The wellness of a group can be obtained from group members' feedback and/or group work facilitators' observations.

Group members can provide input on their progress, reflection, learning and application through check-in and check-out activities at the beginning and end of each group work session. *Examples of the check-in and check-out questions can be found in the review and termination form (Page 40-44).*

Group work facilitators should provide observations on group members' interaction and group dynamics session to session.

Such feedback and observations from the group members and group work facilitators should be documented systematically. Group work facilitators can consider using the review and termination form for documentation. The form can then be used to monitor the group members' progress over time.

Group work facilitators should also obtain information on the group members from different sources so that group members' progress can be reflected more accurately. *For example, in order to understand a teen's progress in a group work, group work facilitators should seek feedback additionally from the teen's school and parents rather than rely on only the teen's report on their progress.*

Quantitative Data

Data could be attained through the use of quantifiable goal tracking tools to monitor the extent of group goals met.

FSCs may use various methodologies for evaluation as long as it is systematic and objective in measuring individual group members' progress towards their individual and group goals.

One example of a tool for use is the Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS) (Kiresuk, Smith & Cardillo, 1994) where assessment of the group members is conducted so that the goals can be measured over time and there are clear indicators to identify the group members' progress.

vi. Documentation of Group Work

FSCs are expected to keep records of all group work session notes, which include the comments/discussions by group members during the group work. The information will be useful to monitor group members' progress systemically against the individual and group goals throughout the group work duration.

Group work session recordings for casework clients should be uploaded in the group work intervention module on SSNet so that the group work sessions can be counted as the total number of sessions rendered to the client.

MIDDLE OF WORKING PHASE

The middle phase of group work focuses on the individual group member's accomplishment and the group goals. It is an unique developmental phase of a group marked by group members becoming comfortable with each other although some elements of conflict and disagreement may emerge. The primary task of the group work facilitators during the middle stage is to help group members accomplish the goals through the learning activities.

The tasks involved in the middle of the working phase are similar to the beginning phase. However, a group work review should be held at this phase to ensure the group work is meeting the needs of individual group members and the group-as-a-whole.

Group Work Ongoing Review

Group work should be reviewed periodically to check the group's alignment to the group goals.

Upon review, group work facilitators should provide the following to the Head or designated personnel of the agency:

- A summary of qualitative and quantitative feedback about the group work
- Obstacles faced in group work
- Plans for subsequent sessions
- Group members' turnover rate
- Reflection on facilitation and observations

A group work review should be carried out as frequently as possible. FSCs should conduct minimally 2 reviews during the course of a group work, with one of the reviews conducted prior to the group's termination. Upon review, group work facilitators may revise the group goals, indicators and the learning activities to make it more relevant to the group members and provide feedback to group members on their progress.

The recommendations arising from the review should be carefully documented and reflect how the group work is meeting individual and/or group goals and whether the group work structure and session plans need to be modified.

ENDING (TERMINATION) OF WORKING PHASE

Group members should be informed as early as possible when the group work is approaching closure. Reasons for the group termination should be shared with the group. Where relevant and appropriate, the group members should be advised on how their case would be followed up through further casework or if they would be referred for interventions with other relevant agencies/organisations, where appropriate.

End of Group Work Evaluation Report

The objective of the evaluation report is to provide a summary of the group work's achievement. It also serves as a documentation that could guide subsequent group work planning. An end of group work evaluation report and the annual group work submission form should be furnished to the Ministry by 15th April of each year.

CHAPTER 4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following ethical considerations should be upheld in group work practice:

i. Ensuring organisational strategies support group work practice
ii. Ensuring that group work facilitators have proper education, training and experience to lead a particular group
iii. Providing group work facilitators with adequate supervision on their group work practice

Focusing on the conduct of group work process, aspects of ethical practice may include the following (please refer to other group work ethics materials, where appropriate):

- Adherence to screening procedures
- Informing group members about the purpose and goals of the group and giving them information and the importance of confidentiality
- Group work facilitators should understand group members' individual needs and goals and ensure that group members' individual needs and goals can be met by the group
- Group members are protected in a group environment
- Appropriate referrals are made when the needs of a particular group member cannot be met in the group
- Seeking supervision on group work related matters
- Engaging group members for on-going assessments, evaluation, and follow-up of group members
- Documentation of group work process
- Evaluating the group work's output and outcome

CHAPTER 5 REFLECTIVE PRACTICE & SUPERVISION

Reflective Practice and Supervision

Effective group work practice starts with reflective practice. A reflective practice requires group work facilitators to be able to critically review their own practice and accept the guidance and feedback from their peers and supervisors.

Supervision on group work practice is critical. At best it ensures that they are leading the group to the direction that individual and group goals are met. Supervision also helps the group work facilitators to:

- Develop appropriate skills, knowledge and attitudes towards group work practice
- Reflect upon the content and process of the group work so as to:

    - Understand the group members better
    - Become more aware of their own reaction and response to the group members
    - Understand the dynamics of how they and their group members were interacting
    - Understand how they have intervened and the consequences of their intervention
    - Explore other ways of working with the above and other similar situations

Role of Group Work Supervisor

The group work supervisor should preferably possess a higher level of training and group work practice experience than the group work facilitators. It is important to stress the importance of clinically focused supervision that seeks to address issues of group goals, dynamics, leadership styles, facilitation of learning activities, etc.

Though supervision can be done on a one-to-one basis, there are added advantages of conducting supervision on group work matters in a group setting as it provides a parallel learning experience for group work facilitators and they can apply the learning to their group work settings. In addition, a supportive and facilitative supervisory style will enable a more conducive environment for learning and mutual support.

Training and Supervision Hours for Group Work Facilitators

A portion of the supervision hours, as stated in the FSC Service Model, should be allocated to group work supervision based on the agency's practice. In addition, a supervision log including group work supervisor's input on group work should be maintained throughout group work.

	Social Work Practitioner (SWP1)	SWP2/Assistant Senior SWP	SWP/Lead SWP
Training[2] and supervision	• 16 hours of group work facilitation skills training in 2 years • Receive 2-hours live supervision for each group work conducted • 1-hour of supervision for every 4 hours of group work practice • For new group work facilitators, a structured observation is required to ensure effective group work practice (Please refer to annex A)	• 16 hours of group work facilitation skills training in 2 years • Receive 1-hour of supervision for every 6 hours of group work practice	• 8 hours of group work related training in 2 years • Meet generic supervision hours as required in the FSC CSWP

[2] SWPs who have gone through the training required need not attend the same training again when they move to the next level.

Use of Reflective Practice and Supervision at Different Group Processes

Reflective practice in supervision can be conducted across the different stages of the group work.

i. Pre-Group Phase

The group work supervisor should conduct discussions with the group work facilitators on the following issues:

- Revisit the profiles and needs of the potential group members
- Match the group work objectives to the needs of the potential group members
- Match the session content and activities to the objectives
- Criterion for the potential group members
- Role of volunteers and the training they need
- Ensuring sustainability of the group work

ii. Working Phase

Group work supervision can be held retrospectively after the group work sessions or on-site. It is recommended that the group work supervisor conducts at least one on-site supervision.

Critical tasks involving the group work supervisor may entail the following:

<u>Before each group work session</u>

- Ensure learning activities are well deliberated and can be facilitated by the group work facilitators
- Ensure group goals can be measured
- Review group members and group work facilitators' feedback

<u>Within each group work session</u>[3]

- Observe the group session to note areas for improvement, areas done well etc
- Note feedback and input on areas for improvement or areas where future group session needs to be realigned.
  - These observation/feedback would be shared with the group work facilitators at the end of the group session

<u>At end of each group work session</u>

- Evaluate the group session process
- Evaluate the progress of individual members against individual and group goals

[3] Arrangements can be made for the group work supervisors to observe the group sessions from an observation room.

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DIFFERENT TYPES OF PERSONNEL, THE CORE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND RESPONSIBILITIES REQUIRED FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF GROUPS

	Social Work Associate/Entry level Social Work Practitioners (SWPs)	SWPs with about 3-5 years of work experience	SWPs with more than 5 years of work experience
Core Responsibilities	• Not directly managing and executing the group work but can be involved as a co-facilitator • Reporting to a main group work facilitator or other designated personnel • Responsible for peripheral activities like attending to phone enquiries and fixing pre-session interviews, assisting in documentation and evaluation • Assist in needs assessment, literature reviews, maintaining case records, data statistics • Incident reporting (If students are involved in group work, they should be given only a fraction of the group work responsibilities. Close supervision is also recommended.)	• Main group work facilitator • Able to work with diverse people • Design, execute and evaluate learning activities for group work (support, psycho-educational and therapeutic), including use of evidence based materials • Manage group work process and group dynamics • Maintain case records, data and statistics • Supervise junior staff, students and peers • Manage crisis in group work • Liaise with stakeholders for collaborative practice	• Provide leadership in group work services • Provide long-term strategy and direction in group work services • Design, execute and evaluate learning activities for group work • Ensure quality of group work services • Ensure integration of casework, group work and community work • Supervise junior staff and peers • Validate group work plan and outcome indicators • Responsible for agency's data integrity, documentation and report submission • Establish protocol for crisis management

	Social Work Associate/Entry level Social Work Practitioners (SWPs)	SWPs with about 3-5 years of work experience	SWPs with more than 5 years of work experience
Core Knowledge and Skills	• Possess an understanding of different group work types • Possess basic group work facilitation skills • To be involved in the preparation for group work • Assist in recording and conducting evaluation • Conduct initial needs assessment • Possess an understanding of group work theories and constructs • Possess an understanding of group work processes, dynamics and structure • Possess structured group work observational skills • Possess an understanding of group members' issues and developmental needs • Possess an understanding of multi-cultural practice • Possess good facilitation skills	• Able to analyse individual and group needs • Possess experiential, pedagogical and andragogical skills • Possess conflict management skills • Possess good understanding of group work theories and its application to practice • Able to conduct group work outcome evaluations • Possess good group work facilitation skills • Possess good group work supervision skills	• Able to undertake assessment of complex individuals and risks • Is familiar with advanced group work theories • Possess good group work supervision skills • Possess good conduct action research
Group Types	Psycho-educational and support groups	Psycho-educational, support and therapeutic groups	Therapeutic group with specialised group work approaches

GROUP WORK PROPOSAL TEMPLATE

A group work proposal should include, but not limited to, the following:

Components of Proposal	Elaboration
I. Overview	
Name of the proposed group	• Name should clearly state the intent of the group • Name in the group work proposal will be deemed as the official group name for reporting purposes • Nature of the group should be explicitly conveyed • Target client group should be clearly identified • An alternative group name can be considered as long as group members can relate with the group name • Name of the group should be positively written and free from culturally sensitive labels
Purpose of group & type of group	• State the group type, i.e. psycho-educational, support or therapeutic group • The group can be a combination of the 3 components • Indicate the percentage of each of these components in the group
Proposed target group	• State the profile of group members. *For example, a group of young mothers with school going children who needs support in parenting (same situation) or a group of older people seeking companionship (same goals)* • State the target number of members, and any inclusion and/or exclusion criterion - Inclusion criteria includes: the age range, brief background characteristics of potential group members, issues/problems faced or area of interest *(e.g. parenting)* - Exclusion criteria rules out potential group members who possess particular characteristics that make them unsuitable for the particular group planned - Some exclusion criteria may include: exhibition of self-destructive behaviours and/or aggression towards others, actively suicidal, inability to participate in a group setting • State the method of screening potential group members

Components of Proposal	Elaboration
Proposed group work structure	• Things to consider: - Time required for pre-group and working phase of the group work process - Proposed number, interval and length of sessions - Session outline are aligned to the group goals - Design of learning activities, taking into account the target group's profile and learning needs - Justification for closed or open group ▪ Dependent on the type of group to be conducted. *For example: A support group may be run as an open group which continues to meet on a regular basis over an extended period while a therapeutic group might be limited to a number of sessions* • The timing, length and duration of group work interventions needs to take into account the following: - Aim and desired outcomes of the group - Availability of group work facilitators - Availability of the group members - Interest/attention span of the age group of group members - Energy levels of the group *(e.g. group for elderly vs a group for teenagers)* - Practical needs of the group *(e.g. child care arrangement and consideration for young parents' group)* • State the exit procedures for group members
How has the individual and group need(s) been identified	• Needs assessment conducted • Magnitude and prevalence of these issues • Community resources available to help the target population
Justification for group work	• Provide justification on: - How existing service providers are not meeting the identified needs - How the group work may be able to address the identified service gap
Literature review	• Guide the understanding and design of the session outlines: - Theoretical frameworks - Research knowledge

Components of Proposal	Elaboration
Proposed goals of the group	State what the group aims to achieve
Desired outcomes for the group	• Outcomes indicators should be: - Relevant and realistic - Change-oriented - Stated in measurable terms (SMART)
II. Implementation	
Session outline & focus of each session	• Session outline helps the group work facilitators to: - Plan and thereby anticipate the potential challenges and resources needed - Estimate the time needed to undertake various activities, including check-in and check-out questions - Articulate the learning activities - Explain the rationale for the learning activities - Identify the resources needed
Publicity & recruitment plan	• Recruitment and publicity strategies should consider: - How target group may be reached - How to interest target group into joining the group work
Resources required	• Consideration for logistic should include: - Plan to make group work attendance as easy as possible for its group members. *For example, if the group member is unable to attend the session because of child minding responsibilities, there should be plans made together with the group member to find alternative resources to manage this obstacle* - Budget for venue and refreshments etc. • Resource consideration should include: - Resource persons and materials - Number of group work facilitators and the skill sets required to run the group work - Ongoing training and supervision to support group work facilitators • Based on the group work session design and objectives, FSCs can also leverage on: - Volunteers - Group members from previous runs of group work (if applicable) and other resource persons

Components of Proposal	Elaboration
	- However, it is important to note that their role should not replace the FSC workers who are the main and/or co-group work facilitators • Proposal for collaboration with other stakeholders to be included here
Expected obstacles and how will they be overcomed	Group work facilitators should anticipate the foreseeable challenges and pre-plan ways to circumvent them. *(e.g. potential dropout of group members)*
Sustainability plan	The group work proposal should articulate plans on how the group work will be sustained
Evaluation Framework of the Group	• Evaluation framework should: - State the methods group work facilitators will use to monitor the group members' and the group's progress • Group work facilitators should: - Plan their evaluation from the onset - Conduct evaluations throughout the group work process - Be driven by the individual and group outcomes
III. Documentation & Reporting	
Documentations to maintain	• Group work facilitators should: - Clearly indicate how group work process will be documented - Include forms/templates that will be used - Consider the required indicators necessary for submissions to the Ministry

Types of Learning Activities

Learning activities form the core content in group work. A selection of learning activities should be made based on the purposes of a group, the needs of group members, the individual and group goals, the resources available and competency of group work facilitators in facilitating such activities.

Learning activities can be broadly classified into 4 categories:

i. Personal Activities

Personal activities are carried out by individual group members in a group setting and aim to enhance personal awareness and reflection. *For example, group members are given a questionnaire to report on their coping strategies.*

ii. Collaborative Learning Activities

Collaborative learning activities aim to enhance learning through interpersonal activities, such as through group scenario planning and group discussions. *For example, group members are organised into small groups to discuss various techniques that they can use to cope with grief. They will then reflect on their learning and apply it to their own experiences through the activity.* It is important that group members focus on their personal learning and reflection through these collaborative activities.

iii. Skill Focused Activities

Skill focused activities are guided activities that help group members in developing a skill. They are experiential in nature and seek to enhance group member's problem-solving skills. *For example, group members learn how to be assertive in a given scenario through the activity.*

iv. Application Activities

Application activities are activities that require the group members to apply their learning in the group to real-life situations outside of the group setting. They are typically skills that individual group members need for day-to-day problem solving. *For example, group members are to share with the group how they negotiated parenting roles with their spouse over the past week and how they applied the skills learnt through the group in that situation.*

Group work materials and activities should be developed for the group members to apply to situations/scenarios in their natural environment with the intent of improving their knowledge, skills and attitudes towards issues concerning them. Having group members apply knowledge, internalise materials and transfer learning is important especially when the group work consists of adult participants.

GROUP WORK OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Name of the person providing the feedback:_____ Date: _____

Role of person providing the feedback:

☐ Facilitator of the group (self-assessment)

☐ Co-facilitator of the group (peer-assessment)

☐ Group Work Supervisor (supervisory-assessment)

Theme Delivery	**Rating/Remarks** 0 - - - Proficient 1 - - - Adequate (to maintain) 2 - - - Needs Improvement (to build) 3 - - - Not Evident N.A. - - - Not Applicable
1. Clear introduction of theme and objectives	
2. Good and relevant illustrations and examples	
3. Clear transition from one segment to the other	
4. Clear explanation of session	
5.Clear instructions given for activity	
6. Link live observations to reinforce theme	
7. Familiar with overall outline	
8. Flexible to adapt materials on the spot	
9. Familiar with content (know what you are talking about)	
10. Complete session within timeframe	
11. Able to meet session objectives	
12. Conclusion: Highlight/review key points for the day	
Manage Group Processes Including Responding to Conflict	**Rating/Remarks**
1. Able to handle distractions	
2. Able to sustained group members' interest	
3. Facilitate responses from the group members	
4. Maximize group members' participation	
5. Praise and affirm group members	
6. Reinforce good behaviour appropriately	
Co-Facilitation Skills	**Rating/Remarks**
1. Practical help to co-facilitator (e.g. give out materials, writing on the board, etc)	
2. Link live observations of group members to support co-facilitator's teachings	
3. Engage in meaningful conversation with co-facilitator	
4. Assist in when co-facilitator is stuck/forgets a point	

Presentation Skills	**Rating/Remarks**
1. Audible voice	
2. Clear in enunciation & pitch	
3. Appropriate pace of speaking	
4. Engaging and enthusiastic tone	
5. Smooth flow of speech (No repeated words and vocalized pauses)	
6. Able to build rapport and smiles	
7. Maintain good eye contact	
8. Appropriate hand gestures	
9. Appropriate use of IT/media and resources	
10. Professional & modest dressing	
Volunteer Management Skills (if applicable)	**Rating/Remarks**
1. Give clear instructions	
2. Has good relationship	
3. Affirm/identify strengths	
4. Facilitate feedback during debrief	
5. Efficient role assignments/division	
Observations of Strengths/Suggestions:	
Follow up actions for Group Work Facilitator:	

DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED OF FSCS IN GROUP WORK PRACTICE

The following documents are required for quality reassurance (refer to the prescribed forms for reference). FSCs may modify the forms as long as all the domains in the forms are included:

Agency's internal documents	Reference	When the document is required
Group Work Proposal Template	Annex B	Planning & preparation phase
Group Work Observation Checklist	Annex D	Working phase. Minimally one live supervision for new group work facilitators
Intake Assessment Form or other screening forms, if used by FSCs	Refer to casework intake form (can be printed from SSNet)	Pre-group contact with group members
Group Goal Formulation Form	Form 1	Beginning of the working phase
Group Work Session Notes	Form 2	Working phase - every session
Review and Termination Form	Form 3	Review of group work at least 2 to 3 times (depending on lengths of group work) from middle phase to ending of group work
Documents to be submitted to MSF	**When the document is required**	
Final Group Work Evaluation Report	Submitted by 15 April upon completion of financial year	
Aggregate Group Work Submission Form	Submitted by 15 April upon completion of financial year	

FORM 1

<<FOR FSC'S RETENTION>>

GROUP GOAL FORMULATION FORM

For group work facilitators to formulate group goals from individual goals

Part A: Individual Members' Specific (SMART) Goals
Please add more rows as required

	S/N	Individual Needs	Goals	Specific (SMART) Goals
Group member 1	1			
	2			
	3			

	S/N	Individual Needs	Goals	Specific (SMART) Goals
Group member 2	1			
	2			
	3			

	S/N	Individual Needs	Goals	Specific (SMART) Goals
Group member 3	1			
	2			
	3			

Part B: Group's Specific (SMART) Goals
Please formulate group goals from group members' individual goals. Please add more tables and rows as required.

S/N	Group Needs	Group Goals	Specific (SMART) Group Goals	Session Plan (Learning Objectives) (Include Learning Activities that can help achieve Specific Group Goals)

FORM 2

<<FOR FSC'S RETENTION>>

GROUP WORK SESSION NOTES

FSC may use this template for every group session

Name of group work:			
Session No.:	____ out of ____ sessions		
Date:		Time:	to
Main Facilitator(s):			
Co-facilitator(s):			
Observer(s):			

Specific (SMART) group goals
(Please state what group members could achieve from the session)
(Tick if objective is achieved)

	( )
	( )
	( )
	( )
	( )

Group Level Evaluation

Sociogram
Sketch how interaction is like between (i) group workers, (ii) group workers and members and (iii) among group members. Also to be used to identify subgroup patterns and isolated members.

Part 2a: Qualitative Feedback by Group Members
(for group work facilitators to fill in – record group members key words and verbatim as closely as possible)

Can be used to compile qualitative feedback for submission to MSF

Check-in responses Sample questions: 1. What did I learn from the last session? (Except for 1st session)? 2. How did I apply them? 3. What difference did it make for me?	**Check-out responses** Sample questions: 1. What did I learn from today's session? 2. What has been useful to you? 3. How would I intend to apply them to my situation? 4. What areas do you hope the group work can do more?

Part 2b: Feedback by Group Work Facilitators

Observations/Assessment/Comments 1. Were the group goals achieved? 2. What went well? 3. What are the areas for improvement? 4. Were there any critical incidents?	**Follow up and recommendations (if any)** 1. What are the follow up plans for areas of improvement? 2. What are the follow up plans for critical incidents that happened?

Part 2c: Group work facilitators should contact group members to address the feedback and improve on the future sessions. Please state your contact with the group members.

Date	Time	Key observations/discussions

Part 3: Other Areas for Improvement (e.g.: facilitation, logistics, time management etc.)

Part 4: Group Work Supervisor's inputs, if any.

<<FOR FSC'S RETENTION>>

FSC-CSWP GROUP WORK REVIEW & TERMINATION FORM

It is recommended that this form should be used at the middle phase and at termination. FSCs may use this form more frequently as deemed helpful for the group work.

Group work with 12 sessions or less	Group work with more than 12 sessions
At least 2 reviews. One of the reviews is to be held upon termination	Review every 6-8 sessions. One review is to be held upon termination

Name of group work	
Duration of group work	
Group work facilitator(s) and co-facilitator(s)	

Part 1:
Note: Please insert additional column/s if there were more reviews done.

		Review 1 (RV 1)/ Date	Review 2 (RV 2)/ Date	Review 3 (RV 3)/ Date	Termination (T)/ Date
Output	Average attendance of casework clients:				
	Average attendance of service users:				
	Number of sessions completed:				

INDIVIDUAL GROUP MEMBER'S GOAL ATTAINMENT SCALE (GAS) TEMPLATE

(Indicators are crafted based on the individual group member's ability to attain the group goals as an individual group member. If more group members score '0' (expected outcome) and above, it means that the group is successful)

FORM 3

Group member 1 (Please add tables according to number of group members)

Outcome Level	Specific Group Goal 1: Group member is able to identify strengths and use them to address the challenges that they are currently facing.				Specific Group Goal 2: (type the description of goal here)				Specific Group Goal 3: (type the description of goal here)			
	RV 1	RV 2	RV 3	T	RV 1	RV 2	RV 3	T	RV 1	RV 2	RV 3	T
Most favourable outcome (2)	Able to identify at least 2 strengths that can be used to address current difficulties, also able to describe scenarios where the use of her strength has led to a positive outcome.											
More than expected outcome (1)	Able to identify at least 2 strengths that can be used to address current difficulties.											
Expected outcome (0)	Able to identify at least 1 strength that can be used to address current difficulties.											
Less than expected outcome (-1)	Able to identify at least 1 strength, but does not acknowledge that strength can be used to overcome current struggles.											
Most unfavourable outcome (-2)	Unable to identify any strengths.											

Outcome

	RV 1	RV 2	RV 3	T
Total score	Goal 1 + Goal 2 + Goal 3	Goal 1 + Goal 2 + Goal 3	Goal 1 + Goal 2 + Goal 3	Goal 1 + Goal 2 + Goal 3
Average score	Total score / weightage of goals	Total score / weightage of goals	Total score / weightage of goals	Total score / weightage of goals

*Adapted from: Toseland, R.W. and Rivas, R.F. (2014). An Introduction to group work Practice. 7th ed. NY: Pearson.

Areas of Review	
	Reasons for not meeting group goals
	Other areas of reviews: **Presented and/or Underlying Issues:** E.g. Has the issues been attended to? Are there new issues that surfaced? **Learning Activities:** E.g. Are the activities appropriate and engaging? **Group Dynamics:** E.g. How is the communication, group cohesion etc like? **Members & Participation:** E.g. How has the group member composition affected the group? How has it impacted the attrition rate? **Co-leadership & Quality of Facilitation** E.g. How can group work facilitation be enhanced to enable group members to bond/understand the content? **Strategies Support:** E.g. Is a competent SWP in place for this group work? How can partnership with other FSCs/agencies who sent their group members be enhanced? Any logistical concerns? Need for better management/training of volunteers?

GROUP'S GOAL ATTAINMENT SCALE (GAS) TEMPLATE

(Indicators are crafted based on the group members' ability to attain the group goals as a group. If the score is '0' (expected outcome) and above, it means that the group is successful)

FORM 3

Outcome	Outcome Level	Specific Group Goal 1: Group member is able to connect with each other based on shared experiences				Specific Group Goal 2: Group member is aware of the perceptions of "womanhood" and able to take steps to address limiting perceptions				Specific Group Goal 3: Group member is able to identify strengths and use them to address the challenges they are currently facing			
		RV 1	RV 2	RV 3	T	RV 1	RV 2	RV 3	T	RV 1	RV 2	RV 3	T
	Most favourable outcome (2)	8 out of 8 group members are able to identify at least 2 personal struggles that they find connection with another member of the group				8 out of 8 group members are able to identify 2 limiting ideas of "womanhood" and at least 6 out of 8 are able to identify at least 2 strategies to overcome these limiting ideas				8 out of 8 group members are able to identify at least 2 strengths that can be used to address their current difficulties			
	More than expected outcome (1)	At least 6 out of 8 group members are able to identify at least 2 personal struggles that they find connection with another member of the group or 8 out of 8 are able to identify at least 1 personal struggle that they find connection				At least 6 out of 8 group members are able to identify 2 limiting ideas of "womanhood" and at least 4 out of 8 are able to identify at least 2 strategies to overcome these limiting ideas				At least 6 out of 8 group members are able to identify at least 2 strengths that can be used to address their current difficulties **OR** 8 out of 8			
	Expected outcome (0)	At least 6 out of 8 group members are able to identify at least 1 personal struggle that they find connection with another member of the group				At least 6 out of 8 group members are able to identify 2 limiting ideas of "womanhood"				At least 6 out of 8 group members are able to identify at least one strength that can be used to address their current difficulties			
	Less than expected outcome (-1)	At least 4 out of 8 group members are able to identify at least 1 personal struggle that they find connection with another member of the group				At least 4 out of 8 group members are able to identify 2 limiting ideas of "womanhood"				At least 4 out of 8 group members are able to identify at least one strength that can be used to address their current difficulties			
	Most unfavourable outcome (-2)	Less than 4 out of 8 group members are able to identify at least 1 personal struggle that they find connection with another member of the group				Less than 4 out of 8 group members are able to identify 2 limiting ideas of womanhood				Less than 4 out of 8 group members are able to identify at least one strength that can be used to address their current difficulties			

	RV 1	RV 2	RV 3	T
Total score	Goal 1 + Goal 2 + Goal 3	Goal 1 + Goal 2 + Goal 3	Goal 1 + Goal 2 + Goal 3	Goal 1 + Goal 2 + Goal 3
Average score	Total score / weightage of goals	Total score / weightage of goals	Total score / weightage of goals	Total score / weightage of goals

*Adapted from: Toseland, R.W. and Rivas, R.F. (2014). An Introduction to group work Practice. 7th ed. NY: Pearson.

Areas of Review	
	Reasons for not meeting group goals
	Other areas of reviews: **Presented and/or Underlying Issues:** E.g. Has the issues been attended to? Are there new issues that surfaced? **Learning Activities:** E.g. Are the activities appropriate and engaging? **Group Dynamics:** E.g. How is the communication, group cohesion etc like? **Members & Participation:** E.g. How has the group member composition affected the group? How has it impacted the attrition rate? **Co-leadership & Quality of Facilitation** E.g. How can group work facilitation be enhanced to enable group members to bond/understand the content? **Strategies Support:** E.g. Is a competent SWP in place for this group work? How can partnership with other FSCs/agencies who sent their group members be enhanced? Any logistical concerns? Need for better management/training of volunteers?

NOTES

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