

How to organize 6 Support Group Sessions

For women and adolescent girls
at risk or survivors of GBV
using a survivor-centered approach.



About ABAAD...



ABAAD-Resource Center for Gender Equality is a non-profit, non-politically affiliated, non-religious civil association that envisions a world in which men and women live as equitable partners and work together to secure better lives for their future. Women are effectively empowered and participate in democratic processes that affect their lives and their communities. In this world there is no violence or discrimination, and women live in freedom, dignity and inner peace. Women also have fair access to assets and resources within their communities.

ABAAD aims to achieve gender equality as an essential condition to sustainable social and economic development in the MENA region. ABAAD seeks to promote women's equality and participation through policy development, legal reform, and gender mainstreaming, engaging men, eliminating discrimination, and advancing and empowering women to participate effectively and fully in their communities. ABAAD also seeks to support and collaborate with civil society organizations that are involved in gender equality programs and advocacy campaigns.

About the Danish Refugee Council (DRC)...



The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) is a humanitarian, non-governmental, non-profit organization working in Lebanon since 2004. In May 2011, DRC responded to a call from UNHCR, when the Syrian crisis started and the first Syrian refugees came into Lebanon. DRC believes that refugee must be in able to access protection and durable solutions and hence the emergency response aims to provide immediate relief and protection to displaced refugees, including their vulnerable hosts, in an impartial, inclusive and neutral manner, adhering to the Code of Conduct of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. DRC's emergency strategy focuses one four core sectors of intervention i.e. provision of Protection, Food and Non-food Items (NFI), Shelter and Livelihoods.

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SUPPORT GROUPS TO ADDRESS GBV IN COMPLEX EMERGENCIES

Complex emergency setting...

In complex emergency settings, the breakdown of state structures and authorities together with adverse socio-political and economic factors leads to abuse of human rights as well as manifests humanitarian needs.

GBV in complex emergencies...

GBV is a life-threatening human right abuse and protection issue that expands in complex emergencies. Sexual violence is the most immediate & dangerous type of GBV occurring in emergencies – affecting women, men, girls, & boys. It is the duty of all humanitarian actors to prevent sexual violence & to provide appropriate assistance to survivors¹.

In emergency settings, the following forms of GBV might exist:

- Sexual violence - most immediate & dangerous
- Sexual exploitation & abuse - driven by crisis & by power imbalance
- Intimate partner violence - may increase after the crisis
- Trafficking & forced prostitution
- Forced/early marriage
- Harmful traditional practices²

Case management vs. SG in complex emergencies...

Case management is a one-on-one process that involves many people and organizations to figure out **what a person needs**, give them **options** and then support them in getting their needs met, using their **own strengths and assets**. It involves a number of steps including preparing, listening, engaging, assessing, informing, planning, implementing, referring, following up and closing.

Support group and GBV...

While case management helps in identifying options and needed services, the support group ensures a space of expression where women and girls who are at risk of GBV or who survived GBV will receive direct psychosocial support.

The aim is to give them the opportunity to work:

- 1) On an individual level to develop their self-awareness and self-help capacities,
- 2) On the relational level to build a supportive social network
- 3) On a broader coping level to deal with the daily stressors

In addition, through this focused non-specialized activity, humanitarian actors can:

- Work on the **prevention** of further or future harm.
- Ensure a continuous **monitoring** of GBV issues throughout the development of the emergency situation.
- Ensure a continuous **assessment** of the existing needs and resources on the individual, community and contextual levels.

This manual will highlight specific psychosocial and safety guidelines that should be taken into consideration by the facilitators when providing non-specialized support to groups of Women and girls who are survivors of GBV, who witnessed GBV or who are at risk of GBV.

Recruitment of participants to the SG

Some factors, such as indicators of recruitment to the SG, might contribute to the development of a containing dynamic in the group. For this non specialized activity recruiting women and girls who

¹ IASC Guidelines for GBV Interventions in Humanitarian Settings

² Case management in emergencies, ABAAD and IMC

went through the same painful event (such as divorce, loss of loved one, etc.) as members of a same group is not compulsory.

This might indirectly lead to labeling or stigmatization (examples: “group of widows, group of divorced women...”, which may increase the suffering.

This might make it difficult for the facilitator to manage the situation as they are not specialized mental health professionals.

Syrian women and girls went through different painful experiences, but the points they have in common are their human suffering, their human needs for support and their human resources. Support groups that allow these common points to be identified and expressed highly contribute to sharing different human experiences and lessons learned, giving therefore more chance for resources to be discussed and for resilience to be encouraged.

Participants assigned to the same group should have common life interests or concerns but do not have to be survivors of the same or similar painful events

When women and girls are recruited to a SG, ensure that participants assigned to the same group:

- ✓ can be included in the same age range
- ✓ are not suffering from a recent traumatic event or from a psychiatric disorder; some participants might need specialized mental health support in an individual confidential setting prior to their enrollment in a group setting.
- ✓ share general life interests or concerns (difficulties due to displacement, have children, arrived in the same period to Lebanon, etc...)

Presenting the activity and its objectives

During the recruitment process as well as during the first session of a SG, the role of the facilitator in explaining the activity and its objectives is vital; this first step gives participants a reason to choose to engage themselves in the SG despite all the challenges they are facing and despite all the material needs they lack in their daily survival struggle. Thus the facilitator should:

- ✓ Show empathy and understanding of the daily struggle the participants might face
- ✓ Explain the objective of the SG and the importance of attending it
- ✓ Appreciate the effort women and girls are doing to come to a SG
- ✓ Give the participants the choice to attend or not
- ✓ Share with them a metaphor that explains the objective of the SG
- ✓ Explain why the engagement in each of the 6 sessions is important

Show empathy and understanding of the daily struggle the participants might face:

For example you can say: “what I hear from women and girls who come to this center is that the basic needs and services are lacking and that this is the major stressors they are facing in their daily lives here in Lebanon”

Explain the objective and importance of the the SG:

For example you can say: “in emergency and displacement settings the needs are numerous and the struggle increases with every day that goes by while families and individual are far from home. War not only affects the infrastructure (the buildings, the roads, etc...) of a country, but it also affects our relations to each other and mostly our relation to ourselves, do you agree on this point? Can you give me examples? This space of expression will give each participant the chance to rebuild her relation to herself by taking care of herself and consequently rebuild relations with others”. (You can give examples of success stories from previous support groups)

Appreciate the effort women and girls will do/are doing to come to the SG:

For example you can say: “I really appreciate that despite all the challenges you are facing you chose to come to this space and take care of yourself”

Give the participants the choice to attend or not, and at the same time share **a metaphor that further explains the objective of the SG and explains why the engagement in each of the 6 sessions is important:**

Metaphor of the group:

You can explain the SG’s objectives and ask the participants to think of a metaphor that represents the process. You can give examples of other groups’ metaphors to explain your point of view and at the end of the first session, you can ask women to try and find another metaphor for their group.

Example of how to work through the metaphor in a group:

The metaphor can be concretely transformed into a ritual that can be used throughout the SG process.

Explain to participants that the SG process is a set of 6 sessions that are linked and contribute to a set of defined objectives; working on the relation with one’s self, the relations with others and on using one’s resources to cope with the stresses of daily life.

Give a metaphor to explain the objective by saying: “our group work is similar to the process of handcrafting a pearl necklace. During each session, each women will add some pearls to this necklace in order for her to have a complete necklace at the end of the process”.

“During the first session each participant will receive a string that is the base of the necklace, and at the end of each session, you will find in the middle of the venue a basket with pearls inside”. Invite participants to imagine that the pearls are degrees of comfort or number of new ideas that they discovered during this session. Now ask each participant to take a number of pearls that represents the degree of comfort or the number of new ideas that she felt/discovered in this session and to add them to the string.

Explain metaphorically the importance of commitment to the group; in order to complete the necklace

a certain number of pearls is necessary.

You can also improvise to this activity in the middle of the SG process in order to answer the “building the relation with others’ objective: ask participants during the 4th session of the SG if they would like to handcraft other necklaces that they will hand out, at the end of the SG process, to other women and girls in the community who are in need for support, in order to invite them to the SG and to explain its objectives. The necklaces can also be handed out to women and girls who are presenting support in the participants’ lives in order to thank them.

The handcrafted metaphor can be a personal reminder of the personal growth or work done by each participant in the SG. The participant can keep this as a souvenir.



STARTING A SUPPORT GROUP: BASIC CONSIDERATIONS

Duration of the session and Number of participants

It is recommended in the current emergency setting to work for one hour and a half with 8 to 10 participants. Size varies depending on the purpose of the group and the needs of the members; however small groups can be more effective because they help participants feel safe in exchanging & expressing feelings, and in building trust relationships.

The group's specificities

Following the recruitment process, especially after the first session, it is beneficial to identify the group's specificities and to adapt the intervention's plan accordingly. Therefore the facilitator can ask herself the following questions or identify the following points indirectly through the discussions conducted with the participants:

- ✓ What are the specificities to this particular age group and background?
- ✓ Have they had any previous support sessions?
- ✓ What level of understanding do they already have on GBV?
- ✓ Why are the participants interested in this session?
- ✓ What are the participants' goals/expectations?
- ✓ What do they hope to achieve?
- ✓ What is the facilitator's goal?

Organization & preparedness

Facilitators should think of the following before starting a SG:

- ✓ Ability to manage time, space and documentation and be familiar with the steps of this manual to be able to adapt it when needed
- ✓ Be familiar with the GBV guiding principles
- ✓ Be flexible and adapt the plan based on the needs and knowledge of each group of participants. Making it meaningful for them!
- ✓ Document and share with your colleagues lessons learned during/from each session. The field experience is a valuable resource for professional growth!

Safety assessment

While working with women and girls who are GBV survivors or who are at risk of GBV, it is crucial to continuously review/audit what and how well your organization is doing to ensure the psychological and physical safety of women and girls who access your services.

Some important information that you and your colleagues should have knowledge off includes:

- ✓ **Awareness of the GBV issues and laws in your country.**
- ✓ **Monitoring and documenting all the information that is shared during the discussions.**
- ✓ **In case women and girls attending SG are at risk:**

Are their clear policies and procedures to protect these women and girls who are at risk?

Is there an identified partner who can provide shelter and protection to the women and girls who are at risk?

Is the location of the SG confidential and does it ensure the physical and psychological safety of women and girls?

Choosing the SG's venue and timing should be based on the following considerations:

- ✓ Women and girls should be consulted regarding the potential risks they might face while participating in the SG
- ✓ Based on the specificities of each intervention, socio-political as well as security factors should be considered before planning for the SG
- ✓ Are facilitators and case workers continuously trained, supervised and supported to ensure that no psychological harm will become to women and girls while working with them?
- ✓ Are monitoring and evaluation of the quality of services ensured by local or international partners?



FACILITATOR'S COMPETENCY MAP

Competencies are a set of motives, knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviors required to perform effectively while respecting the do no harm principles, especially when working with women and girls survivors of GBV in armed conflicts and displacement contexts. In summary, a SG's facilitator should have or be able to develop competencies on the following 5 levels:

Competencies map of a SG's facilitator can be summarized in 5 levels: What, How, the context, the organizational and the self-awareness.

1- "What": knowledge, information about techniques, analytical thinking

A SG's facilitator should be able to understand the impact that war and displacement can have on a community, family, and individuals. Moreover, the facilitator should be aware of the different dynamics in a GBV situation and its complexity in emergency settings. In complex emergencies, humanitarian actors can oversimplify the situation and think in a linear cause/effect way. A SG's facilitator should be able to remember always that the situation is complex. In addition, the facilitator should have core knowledge of:

- ✓ Protection of women and girls at risk and, witness or survivors of GBV in emergencies
- ✓ Psychosocial support and considerations while working with women and girl survivors or the ones at risk of GBV
- ✓ Humanitarian intervention principles including "do no harm".

2- "How?": techniques and practical experience on how to implement or put in action the "What"

The facilitator should be able to put into practice the knowledge they have while working with groups of women and girls through planning, implementing and monitoring the activities with creativity and flexibility. Technical competencies of a facilitator can be difficult to evaluate unless on job observation or field coaching is done. However, continuous capacity development as well as technical supervision are needed especially regarding:

- ✓ Steps, guidelines and techniques of conducting SG
- ✓ Case management and when to refer women and girls to specialized mental health services

3- The awareness of humanitarian and socio-political context and the way it is affecting the interaction with beneficiaries

When humanitarian actors are from the directly or indirectly affected community, the interaction with beneficiaries might be affected by the socio-political broader dynamics. Roles of saviors, victims, and perpetrators can easily be attributed to the different parties who are interacting (beneficiaries/humanitarian actors) leading therefore to challenges in the delivery of services. For example, beneficiaries might accuse humanitarian actors of not presenting proper assistance for political reasons or because of their political affiliation, while humanitarian actors might feel that the

community of beneficiaries is responsible for the social and economic burden in the hosting country. Whether expressed or not, these perceptions can negatively affect the attitude that the facilitator have towards the participants. Therefore, it is crucial that the facilitator stays alert and observes these intra and interpersonal dynamics within a group in order to work with women and girls while respecting the impartiality principle of humanitarian work and in order to avoid unhealthy dynamics within a SG.

4- The organizational: Interaction with other staff members and with staff from other NGOs

As part of multidisciplinary team, the facilitator should:

- ✓ Be aware of the complementarities of roles and services within DRC and how to differentiate each interventions towards beneficiaries. That also includes understanding how to introduce the different available services within DRC.
- ✓ Be aware of the referral pathways and services available in their area of intervention.
- ✓ Be able to self-manage time and resources
- ✓ Be flexible to adapt intervention and priorities to the changing reality of the field in emergencies while keeping in mind the overall organizational and the SG's objectives of intervention.

5- The self-awareness: self-motivation and continuous self-observation

A SG's facilitator should be able or willing to reflect and develop herself on the intrapersonal level. Self-care, capacity development and experiencing expression exercises themselves before applying it to others will contribute to this process of self-development. However, the personal motivation is a very subjective and individualistic characteristic that each facilitator should have to be able to work genuinely with women and girls.

Some specificities of working with women and girls at risk of, or survivors of GBV

Trust and control

For women and girls at risk of GBV or who are GBV survivors to commit and benefit from the SG activity they need to:

- ✓ **Trust** the facilitator and the group: Women and girls at risk of GBV and more specifically GBV survivors might have learned through their life experiences that trusting others will not always help. Trusting the group and the facilitator can happen gradually and it is the facilitator's role to ensure that this trust is respected and appreciated in order to help women and girls rebuild the principles of healthy interactions with others. In addition, working on building the trust relationship is essential especially since the group dynamic will play an important role in containing and transforming the painful emotions and memories that might be disclosed in the group throughout the SG process

- ✓ **Feel in control** of the process/ know what to expect: In the situation of GBV, women and girls lose control over the sense of security, over their bodies, their minds and their environment. Empowering women and girls to develop their self-help capacities' starts with developing their capacities to choose what they need and when they need it. In other words, women and girls can first experience what it means to have a choice throughout the SG process. Helping the SG participants to feel in control means that the facilitator should: Share with the participants the overall plan, content and objectives of activities in the beginning of the process and ask them if they agree on it
- ✓ At the end of each session, remind the participants of the subject that will be discussed during the next session and of the number of remaining sessions
- ✓ Share logistical and organization details with participants (location, time, frequency, etc)
- ✓ Share with participants the objective of the documentation and of the evaluation
- ✓ Share with participants the fact they can decide what to share or not in the group and the fact that they can chose to participate in the process of ESG or not.
- ✓ Use rituals of beginning and rituals of closure to give a sense of control through the sense of routine.

Dealing with disclosure of traumatic events and heavy emotions in the SG

Women and girls at risk or survivors of GBV might feel the need to reveal details of traumatic events they went through within the SG process. The disclosure is a normal step in each mental health therapeutic course. However the aim of a SG is not to invite participants to disclose, and the facilitator should never push participants to disclose their wounds because this might have a negative effect on the individual and the group if the expression of feelings is not contained and if the work on the healing process is not following its natural course.

How to deal with Disclosure in the group?

Inform the group members from the beginning of the support process, that your role is to facilitate the discussion and expression. However, you should underline the fact that sometimes, you would manage these expressions by asking someone to stop talking about a particular point in the group and to disclose it or elaborate it more in the confidential individual setting. Also repeat that if you do so, your objective is to protect the person from further psychological harm because sometimes talking about difficult situations might make the person feel much worse if she did not receive the support she is expecting. Therefore it is recommended to talk about the difficult memories in an individual setting where the facilitator would have the possibility to support the person appropriately.

Women and girls might insist on not disclosing their stories if they feel that the group and/or the facilitator are not empathic with them or are talking about “superficial things” that are not really related to their painful reality or past. Therefore it is crucial to prevent this kind of disclosure by:

- ✓ Avoiding the “think positive” exercises and comments especially following sharing of heavy emotions and painful memories in the group. For example, facilitators might encourage the participants to “look at the filled part of a glass, instead of focusing on the empty half”, or they might encourage participants who are complaining repetitively about their lives to think about the bright side of life. In other “positive thinking” attempts to reduce the suffering of participants, facilitators might invite a widow to think about her children, or a mother who lost a child to think about her

other children, etc. Facilitators might also invite participants to practice relaxation exercises where they can imagine themselves on the beach with calm sounds around, etc. The participants might perceive these comments or exercises as a lack of empathy or lack of understanding of the gravity of the situation from the facilitator's side.

- ✓ Showing empathy and even sometimes share brief expressions of empathy such as: "I am humanly touched by your story/situation". In emergency settings, this is important because the most significant role humanitarian actors can play is to "welcome survivors in the human family" after all the inhuman situations they found themselves in, especially in armed conflict zones. Therefore the classical "neutral attitude" needed in development settings or in private sectors, can be perceived as lack of empathy in complex emergencies.

If disclosure takes place in the group, it is recommended to:

- 1 Thank the person who is sharing for his trust and to thank the group for their acceptance and containment
- 2 Try to stop the person from speaking further, remind the group of what everyone agreed on in the beginning of the sessions (you have the right to stop someone from talking for their own good) and give examples to explain your point of view. For example, you can say: "thank you for trusting this space of expression and for starting to share with us such a painful memory/such a deep human pain, etc. I would also like to thank the group for listening to your story and supporting you. However, I would ask you not to share more details for your own psychosocial wellbeing. From my experience, when people share everything all at once, they might regret it afterwards or they might start wondering why they did it and what the group members will think about it. A lot of women have the need and the right to share heavy stories, I would like to invite you to share your story in private at the end of the SG if you agree?".
- 3 Ask the group to share some supporting sentences with the person who expressed a painful or traumatic situation
- 4 Ensure a closure of the situation especially if you feel that the group is affected: If you observe that participants are affected by a sensitive subject that someone shared or that the group is discussing (for e.g. silence in the group, participants who reacted with anger or extreme sadness and refuse to talk...) you can use the "symbol" exercise.

The "symbol" tool of expression should be introduced at the beginning of the process in order to use it whenever it is needed. You can say: "Emotions and thoughts are frequently difficult to express with words especially when we recall difficult moments. Do you know what a symbol is?" Following a discussion around the definition of a symbol, you can give a clear summarized definition with examples: "a symbol is a simple picture that can talk without words or explanations about very complex feelings or thoughts, like the national flag, the wedding ring, etc." During the first sessions of the SG, you can use the Symbol tool to invite participants to evaluate the session; you can say "according to you, how was this first session, can you find a symbol that expresses your feelings and thoughts regarding this first encounter?" A discussion around the participant's symbols and the evaluation can follow; consequently you make sure that all the group members understood this tool.

You can say "as we discussed in session one, try to find a symbol that can talk about your feelings and thoughts at this particular moment, find a symbol in the room or think of a particular symbol and draw it on a piece of paper and put it in front of you in our secure space of expression". You

can also initiate a discussion regarding each symbol if you feel that the group is ready for this step. Ask each of the participants to think of what would make this symbol evolve into a less overwhelming feeling. Help the group members go smoothly from the painful feelings to finding resources in their lives. This should be done gradually without switching rapidly from “negative” to “positive”. Here is a **practical example to explain how:**

- ✓ Let us imagine that group members identified fire (participant 1), a broken house (participant 2), a column standing alone in the middle of a destructed area (participant 3) and a heart with tears (participant 5) as the symbols that express their present emotions.
 - ✓ Asking them if they would like to share in the group a brief description of their symbols.
 - ✓ Now you can say: “despite all the challenges and pain that you are going through, I will now ask you (to participant 1) what can help turning off the fire or make its flames weaker?” Wait for the answer and then go to the next participant (participant 2): “What is making this house stand despite the destruction that hit it? Or what will help its stones to be rebuilt again?” wait for the answer and then ask next participant: “what is keeping this column of collapsing despite all the destruction around it?” and then to participant 4: “what is making this heart beating despite the burning tears?”
 - ✓ If a participant can’t find an answer, say that it is ok and that you will give her more time to think while you will ask the others about their symbols. Following the group round, if the participant didn’t find an answer yet ask her if any of the group member’s answers inspired her or if she can relate to any of the answers.
 - ✓ Participants will usually answer with “looking at my children helps”, “thinking of the people who are fighting for us”, etc. and most of them will find that they have common experiences and issues.
 - ✓ Now you can say “Human beings need to survive especially in difficult situations, and because they need these resources, it is important to reinforce them or protect them, I will now invite you to think of a way to say thank you or to reinforce your resources, here is an example: if looking at your children helps, what will you do differently this week to tell them that you love them? Etc.”
 - ✓ Close the exercise by informing the participants that you will be asking them during the next session about the way they reinforced their resources during the week.
- 5 Ensure an individual session to the group members who seemed affected the most by “inviting them” yourself; “I can see that you were very affected by the session, please let me know if you would like to have a confidential space where you can express more what you are feeling”
 - 6 Always be ready to refer participants to mental health professionals in case of disclosure of traumatic events. GBV survivors often need specialized mental health services in addition to the group support.

N.B.: the above steps are only to be used if a heavy disclosure took place. The objective of the Symbol tool of expression is to transform metaphorically the heavy emotions and to ensure a healthy closure following the disclosure traumatic experience in the group.

The referral to a psychotherapist or a psychiatrist should therefore happen when:

- ✓ A disclosure of a traumatic event takes place
- ✓ The participant reports that she is not able to function in her daily life and that she is finding a lot of difficulties in coping with the present
- ✓ Excessive physical reactions such as severe panic attacks, fainting, seizures.
- ✓ Suicidal thoughts, or threats to harm self or others
- ✓ Delusions or hallucinations
- ✓ The facilitator has the feeling that the woman or girl is disconnected from reality.



SUPPORT GROUP IN 6 SESSIONS: OBJECTIVES AND STEPS OF INTERVENTION

Overall sessions' plan

A certain routine should be established in the SG process in order for women and girls to know what to expect and therefore to trust the space of work and expression. It is thus recommended to try and keep the same overall plan in each of the different sessions:

- 1 Ritual of beginning
- 2 Discussion to introduce the plan and step of the day, or exercise to help the participants predict the objective of the day
- 3 Exercise to facilitate the reflection and the expression around the subject of the day
- 4 Discussion to close the subject and underline the main messages to be adopted
- 5 Participatory evaluation, sharing the number of remaining sessions, the subject of next session
- 6 Ritual of closure

This general plan can be adapted based on the group dynamic and on facilitator's observation. Energizers might be suggested throughout the session if the facilitator feels that the group is tired or is not engaged in the discussions/exercises. However, the choice of rituals, exercises and points of discussion should be logically related and linked throughout the session. In other words, each of the steps within the session should logically introduce the following.

A certain routine should be established throughout the SG process in order to create a safe space of expression. This includes:

- ✓ Repeating the same steps in each session
- ✓ Using rituals of beginning and of closure
- ✓ Establishing the group's ground rules and inviting all participants to respect them in each session
- ✓ Remind participants of the possibility of accessing the individual case management service when needed

Rituals of Beginning and closure

A ritual is a sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and or symbolic objects, usually performed in a designated place, and gathering a group of people for the purpose of celebration, worshiping, civil or political event, rites of passage, etc. Anthropologists see social rituals as one of cultural universals; rituals that have emerged as sociocultural responses to the anxiety that can be generated by changes such as loss, death, war, marriage, etc.:

- ✓ The rituals are there to absorb the anxiety that can be generated by change on a community, family or individual level in any transition from one situation to another.
- ✓ Rituals create a sense of group identity and of belonging through common experience, social bonds and interpersonal relationships.

For those reasons, in chaotic situations such as emergency settings where numerous changes are taking place in women and girls lives,, it is important to create rituals for every support group:

- ✓ A ritual of opening will be something that the participants repeat at the beginning of the session and that will give a clear message saying “now we enter the time / space of the session”. Session after session, they will become familiar to it and even expect it to happen. A ritual can be a game or even words that the participants pronounce for themselves/for the group (e.g.: How are you today?). However, it should always introduce “logically” what follows.
- ✓ A ritual of closure will give the opposite clear message saying “now the time of the session is over / we leave the space of the session”. Similarly to the ritual of opening, the ritual of closure should announce the end of the session. The participatory evaluation of the session is considered as a ritual of closure.

Examples of rituals of beginning:

- ✓ “Walk in space” activity: Ask participants to walk in a well-defined expression space. Guide them as following:

“Try to fill each empty spot of the space with your steps and walk in all directions. Focus on your breathing: take a deep and gentle breath and slowly let it out; repeat it again until you feel your breath more soft and relaxed. check the different parts of your body and try to find where the tension is... focus on the parts where you feel tension and try to relax it muscles with each breath... you can stretch these parts and give it more attention... you can move your shoulders, your neck,... ask yourself how am I today? And when you are ready, look around you and try to find a place in the SG space where you feel most comfortable at this moment and stop there, breath and then when you are ready you can sit there.”

- ✓ Questions like how are you feeling today? What are you expecting from the group today? can also be considered as rituals of beginning if used at the beginning of each group

Examples of ritual of closure:

- ✓ Asking each participant to start a drawing at the beginning of the process and to develop it at the end of each session can be considered as a ritual of closure (please refer to the Group Metaphor page 5 to have more examples)
- ✓ Participatory verbal evaluation of the session can be considered as rituals of closure (please refer to page 30 of this document)

Introducing the individual case management service

Participants should be informed, from the beginning of the SG process that, the individual case management and support service is a space where each woman and girl can express herself confidentially. The facilitator can give real field examples and anonymous success stories of how this service helped other women and girls. Women and girls can access this space when they feel the need to, however, the facilitator can actively suggest to participant to be referred for case management when needed, provided that she gives her informed consent.

The group's ground rules

Ground rules are essential to the dynamic of the group. It is recommended to develop them with the participants at the beginning of the support process as it generates a greater sense of ownership and engagement. The setting of ground rules is one means of establishing safety and trust among group participants before they engage in interacting. Ground rules may include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Being open to other's opinions
- ✓ Honesty
- ✓ Patience
- ✓ Respecting confidentiality
- ✓ Willingness to learn and to listen
- ✓ Supporting and assisting each other
- ✓ Working at our own pace
- ✓ Arriving on time and attending full session
- ✓ Avoiding distractions, such as phone ringing
- ✓ Attending all the sessions

Ground rules can be further integrated in the group dynamics if each concept is developed in the group by the participants themselves. For example, the facilitator can ask participants to work in subgroups on defining some of the core concepts, like the concept of confidentiality, the concept of patience and of being non-judgmental. Each sub-group should come out with a clear definition of the concept and should explain why this concept is important when individual expression is taking place in a group according to them.

The sessions

The content of 6 sessions was developed with DRC case workers and officers during the workshops that took place in April 2014. The sessions were tested with groups of beneficiaries and are based on the staff's field experience and observation of needs, taking into consideration the psychosocial specificities of women and girls survivors of or at risk of GBV and the contextual specificities.

N.B.: the volatile and changing complex context should always be taken into consideration while conducting the SG. The facilitator might replace a session or switch the sessions 2, 3 and 4 or replace any of the session's content by other subjects that might be the group's priority during the implementation of the activity.

Session 1 Introduction and identification of main stressors and resources

Session 2 Identifying and expressing emotions

Session 3 The concept of Trust

Session 4 The Choice and the self-protection

Session 5 The Circle of support

Session 6 The active role in the community

The follow up session



INTRODUCTION AND IDENTIFICATION OF MAIN STRESSORS AND RESOURCES

Introduction (5min)

Welcoming the participants and briefly presenting the main objective of the support group within the framework of DRC services (please refer to page 4 of this document)

“My name is” exercise (15 min)

This exercise can be used with any group at beginning of the support process. When a new group is set up, participants and facilitator will need to know and memorize each other’s names. In addition, the objective of this exercise is to introduce the concept of personal identity of each of the group members. Women and girls are not only survivors, victims, refugees, etc. Facilitator and other group members will help each participant feel again that she is a person with a name, a past, a present and a future.

Instructions:

Ask participants to split in pairs and to share:

- 1- Their names
- 2- The origin of their names and its meanings,
- 3- The story behind their names (who chose their names and why?) and any other related stories.

Tell them to listen to each other carefully because later on each one will share with the group the story of the other. Give them 5 to 7 minutes.

Ask pairs to come back to the group circle and share their stories with the others.

Tips for facilitator

- ✓ This activity may revive some painful memories and emotions so be ready to listen with empathy and thank participants for sharing their story with the group.
- ✓ If some participants don’t know about their names, tell them that it’s OK and encourage them to ask their family members or to do a small research when they go back home. Remember to ask them if they had any further information during the next encounter
- ✓ If you know something general (positive or neutral) about the meaning/origin of their name you can share it with the group.

The group’s ground rules (10 min)

Develop with participants the list of the group’s ground rules. The list can be readapted throughout the coming sessions.

The major stressors and resources (25 min)

In complex emergencies women and girls experience stress from various sources, during open discussions the facilitators can try and sort out the sources of stress in order to work on a later stage on identifying the resources to find adapted coping strategies. For example, on a family level, women and girls might have difficulties interacting with other family members while on a community level they might feel humiliated while walking in the street. The group can discuss the stressors then decide on the common or priority stressors that they would like to address throughout the ESG.

Instructions:

To identify main stressors: Ask participants to think about one of the main stressors that they are facing currently in their daily lives. You can limit the expression by saying: “asking you about your stressors might be difficult because for sure the stressors are numerous. However for those of you who would like to share with us today, please identify the factor that is stressing you the most and share it with the group when you feel comfortable to.”

To identify main resources: When all participants shared their main stressors you can ask them: “now that you have all shared your stressors, and I am sure that if we had more time you might have shared more factors that are stressful in your daily lives, however I would like to ask you to think now about your resources; despite all the stressors and difficulties what is giving you the strength to go on? Where do you get your energy from?”

Explain to participants that the main objective of the support group is to provide them with a space where they can express their stressors but also where they can discover how to reinforce and protect their resources

Tips for facilitator:

- ✓ Participants might want to complain about the lack of services and basic needs since this is a major stressor in their daily lives. It is important to ensure that women and girls who are enrolled in the SG have access to basic needs and services through sharing related IEC materials.
- ✓ The facilitator can have a role in inviting women and girls to express and work on intra and interpersonal related stressors and resources by saying: “the basic needs are lacking and it looks like the services provided are not enough, in this spaces we can discuss the stress generated by this fact but also other stress factors in your daily lives and your relations to others around you.”

The SG's metaphor (15 min)

Introduce the group metaphor and invite the participants to find another metaphor if they would like to base it on their expectations, following your introduction of the SG and its objectives. This will help you evaluate if the objectives are clear to all participants or not and will help participants in adapting their expectations to the SG plan (please refer to page 7 of this document)

Introduction of the ritual and participatory evaluation (15min) *(Please refer to page 15 of this document)*

Ask participants to walk in space if you think this activity is appropriate and invite them to try and relax their tensed body parts if needed by breathing and shaking out the tension.

While walking you can also ask them to think about today's session and to identify one point that they discovered today about themselves or to identify one point that they heard during the session and that was interesting: "try to identify this point while walking and when you find it walk more slowly and stop in a spot of the venue that you find comfortable."

When all the participants stop invite them to go back to their chairs and ask each one of them to share if she would like to, the point that she identified.

A participatory evaluation of the session can be discussed by asking participants about their feedback and recommendations (please refer to page 30).

Closure (5 min)

End the session by:

- ✓ Thanking the participants for their engagement
- ✓ Explaining to participants that you will work together for 5 remaining sessions
- ✓ Reminding them that the individual space is available for anyone who feels heavy after this session.
- ✓ That during the next sessions you will be providing a space to talk about emotions and how to deal with them.

02 IDENTIFYING AND EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

In emergency settings and more specifically in the situation of GBV, women and girls experience numerous losses; the loss of home, of loved ones, sense of safety, identity, sense of control on the present, of hope for the future, loss of sense of trust in others, etc. Women and girls often express an overwhelming grief due to the buildup of these losses. Talking about and being aware of the different losses might contribute to decreasing the grief. However, when participants are asked to talk about and express their feelings, women and girls often find hard to articulate with words their emotional status. Culturally, feelings are easily expressed through expression of body reaction; “my head will explode” or “I can’t sleep” to say I am anxious, “my heart is burning” to say I am very sad, “my stomach is stressed out” to say “I am stressed out”, etc. Helping women and girls to identify and express their feelings can be difficult, however it is an essential step of support when the expression is contained and transformed during the SG.

Ritual of beginning (10 min)

Start with the usual “walk in space” instructions (walking, breathing, relaxing muscles...)

Now ask participants to think while they are walking about the meaning of the expression “good morning”. Invite participants to reflect personally without communicating it; what does this expression really mean? Even though we use it a lot every day, sometimes we forget its meaning.

Now ask each one of the participants to say “good morning” with its real meaning to herself while they are still walking, they can do that through a thought, silently without saying it out loud in the group

While they are still walking, ask them to look around them, in the group and say “good morning” with its meaning to people that they would like to greet today when they are ready. Ask them to “fill the room with the good mornings”

Preparing for the emotional expression (20 min)

Instructions:

While the participants are still walking in space as part of the ritual of beginning, say STOP and ask them to think while standing what is the meaning of the expression: “how are you?”: “we are asked everyday about how we are, but in general we never really give the right answer and even if we do so, we are rarely listened to. Today I am inviting you to think about this word and when you find its meaning, start walking again, and while you are walking ask yourself “how am I today?”

Let the group walk for less than one minute while they are thinking and then say STOP -Now ask participants who are standing next to each other to form pairs and give the following instruction: “today we will use the expression how are you differently; every pair will find a comfortable space in the venue. Then each participant will ask her partner “how are you today” and will listen to her for 3 minutes, then you switch roles and your partner will ask you the same question and listen to you. While listening to the other you are not allowed to give any advice, you will just think of how you are personally feeling while you are listening to your partner. What do you have in common, how does it make you feel to listen to the other?” you can explain further if needed by giving examples: “if I listen to someone who is going through the same difficulties as me, I would think that I am not alone and I would feel reassured, if I am listening to someone who lost a loved one, I would feel touched by her story and maybe I will feel sad”.

Give the participants 6 minutes and then invite them to come back to the group's circle and discuss

Points of discussion in the group:

- ✓ How did you feel while listening to the other?
- ✓ How did it feel when you were listened to?
- ✓ What is the difference between this exercise and the way you usually listen to and are listened to in your entourage?
- ✓ What did you discover about yourself or the other in this exercise?
- ✓ Discuss with participants, that in many cultures naming feelings and expressing them is difficult. And in a lot of cultures women and girls express their feelings with body sensations and even sometimes with body pain (give examples). Explain that in some of the exercises that you will introduce in the sessions, the group will help its members to identify the feelings and express them.

Introduce the symbol exercise (10 min) *(Please refer to page 12 of this document)*

Instructions:

Ask participants to find a symbol in the venue that can summarize how they are feeling today and to bring it and put it in front of them in the safe space of expression. If the symbol cannot be held or brought to the circle of expression or in case the symbol that a participant found is not in the venue, the participants can draw the symbol on a paper and put it in front of them on the floor.

Now invite participants to put few words on their symbols and try to identify the feeling behind this symbol and the body sensation that they feel when they mention this symbol or this feeling. For example if a participant shared an empty bottle of water as a symbol saying that she no longer has any drop of hope, ask her to try and say how this makes her feel and then what does she feel in her body when she talks about it.

It is highly recommended to always work on a closure or on a transformation of the negative or heavy feelings whenever they arise in a group; when all the participants shared their symbols, ask them through the symbols what would make them feel better. For example ask the participant who shared the empty bottle: "what would help you refill this bottle according to you", etc.

Note for facilitator:

By using the symbol exercise during each session (finding a symbol for the feeling, expressing it and then finding the resources), women and girls will gradually discover their capacity to go out of an overwhelming situation throughout the SG process. This point can be discussed with participants following few sessions where the tool was used, to make sure that they are aware of this process.

Identifying feelings and linking them to specific situations (20 to 30 min)

Instructions:

Ask participants to draw a map showing different places or activities they go to or do during the week (house, center, market, cooking, time with neighbors, etc.). They can do so by dividing the paper into 4 to 5 boxes and by drawing an activity or a place in each box

Now ask participants to think about how they feel at the different places or activities they have drawn. They can look in the venue for symbols that express their feelings and draw the symbols on the top of each box. Explain to participants that the same place or activity can produce more than one feeling, so they could have more than one symbol in each box.

Ask participants if they would like to share their drawing and the selection of the symbols/feelings in the group.

Discussion points:

- ✓ Sometimes difficult overwhelming feelings come from one place or one specific situation. In times of crises, human beings tend to feel that this overwhelming negative feeling is, everywhere they go and in everything they do. On your map please try to identify where the overwhelming feeling is mainly coming from and where are the places or what are the activities where you are feeling lighter or more comfortable?
- ✓ Discuss what are the resources in the places or activities where you feel lighter? How can you use these resources in the other places?

Ritual of closure through the group's metaphor and participatory evaluation (15 min)

03 THE CONCEPT OF TRUST

Women and girl survivors of or at risk of GBV find difficulties in trusting others especially when they were harmed by people they trusted or when there was no one in their entourage with whom they were able to build a trust relationship. Throughout the SG, women and girls will have the opportunity to work on their interpersonal relations and on the concept of trust; trusting the group is a first step that can lead on a later stage identify in their lives people they can trust in order to build a healthy social network where they can find support. Through this session, women and girls will have the opportunity of expressing wounds as well as good memories around the concept of trust. This session might be difficult for some women and girls who might remember the heaviness of their wounds, however, the facilitator should always remember that this space of expression is an opportunity where women and girls can express themselves.

Ritual of beginning (10 min)

Preparation for the expression around the concept of trust (20 min)

Instructions:

On a paper invite participants to write 5 words they think about when we say the word "Trust". If participants cannot write you can either suggest to help them write yourself or you can adapt the exercise by asking them to think about 3 words instead of 5.

Now ask each participant to share with the group one word she wrote or thought about

Discussion points:

- ✓ How did you feel while doing this exercise?
- ✓ What can be the feelings of a person who lost his capacity to trust others? Why?
- ✓ Can the concept of trust be reconstructed? If yes how and if not why?

Note for facilitator:

It is recommended not to rush into pushing the participants to trust people around them; this is not feasible in one session. The objective of this session is to help participants think about this word, the wounds that are related to it in their lives and about the possibility of rebuilding if needed and when they are ready to build relations of trust with the people they choose.

"Map of Trust" exercise (30 min)

Instructions:

Ask participants to draw on a paper different people they interact with during the week; "think of

people you live with, in the market, in the center, etc. you can draw up to 20 people on the paper if you would like to.”

Invite participants to draw a red flag next to the people they think they can never trust, then a yellow flag next to people they think they might trust and a green flag next to people they surely can trust with no hesitation.

Discussion points:

- ✓ What would make you put a red/yellow/green flag next to the people on your paper, can you share one indicator/characteristic that makes you feel that this person cannot be trusted?
- ✓ What are the points/indicators that make us trust someone or not?
- ✓ Do you think there are other people in your surrounding with whom you can build a trust relationship? What does it mean and how will it help you?

Ritual of closure through the group’s metaphor and participatory evaluation (15 min)

In addition:

- ✓ Thank the participants for their engagement.
- ✓ Explain to participants that you will work together for 3 remaining sessions.
- ✓ Remind them that the individual space is available for anyone who feels heavy after this session.
- ✓ Inform the participants that during the next session you will be providing a space to talk about the concept of self-protection, what this word means to them and how to rebuild this concept in their lives if needed.

04 SELF-PROTECTION

Women and girls at risk of or survivors of GBV often feel helpless and cannot protect themselves from the harm they are experiencing. During this session, a discussion around the need for self-protection can take place if the facilitator feels that the group is ready. Otherwise the facilitator can switch session 4 with session 5. It is crucial to remember that women and girls might have experienced distressful situations; respecting their path and avoiding judgments is essential. This session will just give them the chance to express themselves and to think about ways of protecting themselves. It is also important to remember that women and girls who are going through traumatic events (such as severe domestic violence, sexual violence, extreme suffering leading to mental disorders, etc.) should be referred to specialized mental health services before participating in a SG. If a participant is extremely disturbed or collapses during this session, the facilitator should remember that this group might be the only space she felt enough security in to express herself and that her expression is a chance for her to get the support she needs in the group or through referrals.

Ritual of beginning (10 min)

“The Colombian hypnosis” exercise (30 min)

Instructions:

Following the usual ritual of beginning ask participants to walk in space and breathe. After a minute you can say STOP.

Ask 4 participants who are standing close to each other's to stand in couples and ask each couple to discuss and chose who would like to be the leader and who would like to be the follower during this exercise; Explain that the leader will have a magic power in the palm of his/her hand today and that this power works like a magnet: the magic power starts when the leader rubs the palms of his hands and then claps one time.

Ask the rest of the group to sit in a circle around the couples and observe.

The leader puts the palm of her hand at a 20 centimeters distance in front of the nose of her partner and lead/guide her through the movement of her hand; the follower will have to follow the palm of hand of the leader in all directions in the room/space: backward, forward, left, right, rotations, and levels of body position low, high, medium, keeping the same distance between his face and the leader's hand palm. You can practically show the participants what you mean by implementing the exercise with a participant.

Before giving the sign to start explain that a true leader will be followed, however it is her role to physically protect her follower.

Allow time for-synchronization and harmony to take place between the couples, then say STOP and ask them to switch roles.

Discussion points:

- ✓ How did you feel or what did you observe during this activity? What was the most difficult part?

- ✓ What did you learn about yourself (for the 4 participants who played)? Did you feel at any moment that you want to stop and withdraw from the activity? Why?
- ✓ Did you feel protected when you were following the leader? What did you do to protect yourself? Same question for the observers. Despite all the difficulties a woman can face how can she protect herself from harm? Can someone share a practical example of what helped in difficult situations?

Identify with participants the main risks and protective factors in their lives today (20 min)

Following the previous exercise, you can open the discussion and ask participants to identify the main sources of risk that they are experiencing on a family and community level, and the main sources of protection that they can access or empower on an individual, family and community level. Chances are that participants will learn self-protection means from each other.

Ritual of closure through the group's metaphor and participatory evaluation (15 min)

In addition:

- ✓ Thank the participants for their engagement
- ✓ Explain to participants that you will work together for 2 remaining sessions
- ✓ Remind them that the individual space is available for anyone who feels heavy after this session
- ✓ Inform the participants that during the next session you will be providing a space to talk about the concept of support, what this word means to them and how to rebuild this concept in their lives if needed.

During this exercise, participants can become aware of their own support network and get encouraged to ask for help when needed. Women and girls might also be encouraged to enlarge their support network by identifying in their current life new people who can be included in their circle of support.

05 THE SUPPORT NETWORK

Ritual of beginning (10 min)

Preparation for the expression around the concept of support (25 min)

Instructions:

On a paper invite participants to write 5 words they think about when we say the word "Support". If participants cannot write you can either suggest helping them, write yourself or adapt the exercise by asking them to think about 3 words instead of 5.

Now ask each participant to share with the group one word she wrote or thought about.

Discussion points:

- ✓ How did you feel while doing this exercise?
- ✓ What are the kinds of support that we need in our lives?
- ✓ How does it feel to be left without support? How can we find and preserve the sources of support in our lives?

Exercise: "Circle of support": (25 min)

Instructions:

Ask participants to draw on a paper a circle in the middle. Then ask each participant to write her name or a symbol that represents her inside this circle.

Ask each participant to draw around the circle that represents her, one or 2 other smaller circles that represent people who used to support her in the past, or who are still a source of support today in her life. Explain the idea in simple words "draw circles for people who helped you in the past or who are helping you in the present when you were or you are going through difficult moments in your life. Write the names of these people who encouraged you, loved you, ensured a financial or emotional support, or listened to you, etc. in the different circles. You can also choose to draw them..."

After completing this step, ask each participant to draw an arrow coming from each circle toward her circle in the middle and ask her to think and write next to this arrow what kind of support each identified person is providing or provided to her: "what kind of support did they offer or are they offering?"

Now ask each participant to draw a new arrow going from her circle in the middle toward each one of the other circles, and ask her to think and write or draw next to this arrow what kind of support she already gave back to them or she would like to give them. Please note that, at this stage of the exercise, some participants might be very distressed mainly (but not only) in case they realize that the only person who gave them support is dead and that they did not have time to thank him or her. Therefore it is very important to always say at this stage of the exercise: "if the person you identified as a source of support is no longer in your life for any reason, you are already giving him/her a lot in return since you are mentioning him/her in your circle of support, it is like you are acknowledging what you received from this person and you are telling him/her thank you. We can discuss this point further if you would like when we finish the exercise."

Points of discussion:

- ✓ How did you feel about this activity? What would you change in it if you are about to do it again?
- ✓ Was it hard to identify the people who support you? Was it the same when you thought about how you can support them?
- ✓ Do you often remember those people? Are there obstacles that hinder you from asking for support? If any, what are these obstacles?
- ✓ How do you feel usually when you receive support? And how do you feel when you give support?
- ✓ Would you like to enlarge your support network? How can you do that?
- ✓ What did you learn from this activity?

Tips for facilitators:

- ✓ It is normal that some participants might remember lost loved ones, this might make them feel sad or cry. This exercise might help some participants in their mourning process; Try to listen to them as much as possible and ask them if they would like to tell the group more about why this person was so special.
- ✓ This is a personal reflective exercise and participants don't have to share the content of their work with other group members, they can only share their point of views regarding the exercise during the discussion. Thus it is advisable to explain this point to them before they start.
- ✓ Pay attention to participants who seem to have a poor support network and take note for the future in order to better observe and encourage any progress.
- ✓ During the discussion highlight the importance of the support network in participants' lives and emphasize on the right of every human being to ask for support. Consequently, in case a participant didn't find any source of support in her life, you will directly encourage her to try and look for this person in her entourage today.

Ritual of closure through the group's metaphor and participatory evaluation (15 min)

In addition:

- ✓ Thank the participants for their engagement
- ✓ Explain to participants that you will work together for 1 remaining session
- ✓ Remind them that the individual space is available for anyone who feels heavy after this session
- ✓ Inform the participants that during the next session you will be providing a space to talk about the active role that each one can have in her community.

06 CLOSURE AND ACTIVE ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY

During the last SG session, participants will evaluate the process and will remember the main topics and messages they worked on during the previous 5 sessions. In addition, the facilitator can ask each participant to think about women in their environment who would benefit from this space of support. In emergency settings, the supported population is rarely given an active role in the relief efforts, which generates feelings of frustration and helplessness due to the passive/receiver position the individuals and the families are put in, especially when the crisis is ongoing. International guidelines of psychosocial support suggest that giving an active role to the supported community in the relief efforts enhances the development of their self-help mechanisms and therefore reinforces their resilience.

Ritual of beginning (10 min)

Exercise: "The ladder" (30 to 40 min)

Instructions:

Draw on the flipchart the following "ladder":

Where I am, today

4	<input type="text"/>
3	<input type="text"/>
2	<input type="text"/>
1	<input type="text"/>

Where I was when we started the SG?

Now explain to participants that the bottom of the ladder represents the beginning of the SG and that the top of the Ladder represents them today, at the end of this process.

Ask participants to form pairs and to discuss and identify the main "steps" of their ladders. The steps can be events, exercises, concepts, interactions, etc. that they have experienced in this group and that affected them both positively or negatively.

Ask pairs to share their ladders in the group and open the discussion around the different steps that marked them.

Note to facilitator:

Through this exercise, participants will remind each other of the process' milestones. You can therefore assess what were the turning points of the ESG you facilitated and you can surely draw lessons learned from the participants' feedback.

Finalize the group metaphor exercise and discuss the active role that participants can have in their entourage (20min)

Give participants some time to finalize the handcrafting of the group's metaphor and agree with participants on what they would like to do with it; some participants might like to keep it in the center as a souvenir/proof of their participation in the SG, while others would like to take it with them. It is up to the participants to decide.

Invite participants to handcraft another item (necklace, drawing, etc.) and to think of other women and girls in their entourage who would benefit from the SG. Discuss with participants the objective of this step: having an active role in the community following the SG.

Plan with participants for a follow up session (10 min)

Explain to participants that, as agreed from the beginning of the process, the present session is the last one and a follow up session will take place in 3 weeks in order to receive feedback concerning the impact of the SG on their daily lives.

Ritual of closure (10 min)

THE FOLLOW UP SESSION

This session should take place at least 3 weeks following session 6. The objectives of this follow-up are:

- ✓ To have the feedback of participants regarding how they are using the SG's outcomes in their daily lives and in their communities
- ✓ To assess with participants any new gender related issues on the personal or community levels in order to intervene with the case management service if needed.
- ✓ To remind participants that they can have an active role in referring more women and girls from their entourage who might be in need for support

Documentation and M&E

A participatory evaluation of the SG effectiveness can be done at the end of each session; ask participants to share their feedback and recommendations. This can be done through a drawing, a symbol or verbally. The participatory evaluation can also be considered as the closure ritual of each session. Participants can reflect on some or all of the following questions:

- ✓ What did I learn/discover about myself today?
- ✓ What did I learn / discover about the group/the others?
- ✓ What was the exercise/discussion that affected me the most (positively or negatively)?
- ✓ Was there any part of the session that I would have preferred not to participate in? And why?
- ✓ After this session what will I do differently this week:
 - for my-self?
 - or with my family/social network?
 - or to cope with the daily challenges?
- ✓ What are my recommendations for the next session?

In case the facilitator wants to document this participatory evaluation, it should be clear to participants that:

- ✓ Notes will not contain any names or identifying information.
- ✓ Notes will be used for the planning of the next sessions.
- ✓ Notes will also be used for the improvement of the service.

The facilitator's psychosocial wellbeing

Humanitarian aid workers, and more specifically, staff working in emergencies, are exposed to stress from a variety of sources. A number of known risk factors may contribute to burnout/compassion fatigue; however, a number of mitigating factors might lessen the risk for stress-related reactions. The ability to cope with stressful situations depends upon a person's individual capacity for coping, as well as on other external factors.

Support strategies for aid workers usually include:

- ✓ Spreading awareness around the importance of family and social networks support
- ✓ Preventive measures of self-care such as regular breaks and regular group and individual self-care interventions conducted by an external consultant
- ✓ Organizational support systems and more specifically capacity building and technical support: the more the staff has the capacity to support the community and understand the complex emergency context, the less will be the feeling of helplessness. In addition, organizations have the responsibility to ensure a safe and secure self-care space for their staff; this is usually done on a regular basis by an external consultant in groups or individually. Staff have the opportunity then to identify and work on their main stressors and resources.

Exercise: "The symbol of my role within DRC projects"

Objective: to encourage each humanitarian worker to think about his/her perception of the role he/she is playing in the emergency response, to be aware of the risk factors undermining this role and the resources supporting it.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials: simple objects available in the room/venue

Instructions:

You can do this exercise alone or you can implement it with a group of colleagues:

Think about the definition of the word "symbol," what does it mean to you? After you think about it and/or discuss its definition in a group, can we agree that a symbol is a simple object or mark that can represent an abstract and sometimes complex concept?

Following a discussion on the meaning of a symbol, now think about your work and the role you are doing with DRC. When you define the role you are playing within the projects (what you are asked to do, what you think you are doing, etc.) look around you in the room and try to identify an object that can symbolize your role, it can be any object in the venue. Now bring the object and place it in front of you. If the object is too big or cannot be moved, draw it on a piece of paper and place the paper in front of you.

Now discuss: **why did you chose this particular symbol, how do you personally perceive your role?**

Following a group discussion regarding each symbol, try to think of what would happen if you cannot achieve your role as you perceive it. For example if you chose the electric lamp as a symbol because you think that your role is to light the road for people to find the support they are looking for, or if you think your role is like a cell phone because it connects people etc., try to think metaphorically of what would happen if the electricity went off or if the phone network was shut down? What would you feel, how would you react?

Now discuss: What are the main obstacles that are preventing you from accomplishing your goals on the field, what are the main stressors that are affecting your role and how can you prevent or work on them? Then think of the main resources and factors of support that are helping you accomplish your role? How can you empower or protect those factors?

This exercise is an opportunity for humanitarian actors to think about their perceptions of their own role in the emergency relief: when staff start their work with NGOs, they think that they will be helping a lot of individuals and families in coping with the difficulties they are facing. However the more they are confronting the complex reality of the field, the more staff members feel helpless and frustrated. Reevaluating regularly their roles as they perceive it will help them adapt it to the reality, identify and work on the stressors and the resources and therefore decrease the frustration and the helplessness they might be feeling.



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