Strengthening Alliances Among Self Help Groups & Professional Partners

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Adelphi University; International Association for Social Work with Groups;
International Federation of Social Workers; Nirmala Niketan College of Social Work
Workshop Abstract

This international team of self-help group members and human service professionals focuses on action research and advocacy to strengthen partnerships for advancing the post-2015 global agenda. Representatives of the team will highlight the project’s work in Malaysia, United States and India.

We will share experiences from member, administrator and professional perspectives, propose preliminary principles for collaboration, and discuss possible processes for expansion and adaptation.
Introductions and Contents

• Welcome and Introductions
• Collaborating Partners
• Conceptualizing Self Help Groups, Social Work and Partnership
• Project Overview
• Focus on Project in Malaysia, United States and India
• Emerging and Future Activities
• Questions and Follow Up
Additional Organizing Partners

• Jacqueline B. Mondros, Hunter College, Silberman School of Social Work, New York, United States

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• Timothy B. Kelly, University of Dundee, School of Education, Social Work and Community Education, Dundee, United Kingdom

• Siu-wai Lit, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Department of Applied Social Sciences, Hong Kong, Hong Kong

• Sonia Spelters, Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups, German Chapter, Viersen, Germany
Self Help Groups and Social Development A

- SHGs are community platforms for empowerment and bringing people together with common concerns
- Members often gain visibility in their neighbourhood and are advocates for change
- Membership often leads to interaction across diverse groups
- SHGs support members in accomplishing their individual and group goals, as well as the larger community on issues of social change and justice
Self Help Groups and Social Development B

• Members increase their collective bargaining powers
• Members increase their self efficacy through association with others in similar circumstances
• Membership helps increase members’:  
  – Confidence and self reliance  
  – Communication skills  
  – Interpersonal and interaction skills  
  – Decision making skills
Self Help Groups and Professionals: Example of Social Work

- Professional Foundations
- Social Group Work
- Community Organization
- Organizational Practice and Social Work Administration
- Consultation, Technical Assistance, and Training
Study Overview and Methods

• Project Design
  – Self Help Group selection and participation
  – Ethical protections
  – Partnership process

• Project Stages
  – First Wave: Group and individual interviews
  – Second Wave: Emerging principles
  – Third Wave: Review and revision of principles
  – Next Stages: Advocacy and training strategies & coalition building
Themes in Self Help Group Reports

- Beginnings
- Forming Relationships
- Community & Culturally Grounding
- Multiple Modes & Creativity
- Phases of Group Development
- Social Networks and Resources
- Organizational Contexts
- Challenges in Working with Professionals
- Successes in Working with Professionals
Six Emerging Principles for Professional Partners Working with Self Help Groups

First Wave: Preliminary Analysis of Group Narratives
Second Wave: Preliminary Identification of Emerging Principles
Third Wave: Consultation and Revision with Self Help Groups

Emerging Principle A
• Social workers should build relationships with SHGs out of the group’s issues and desires for professional consultation

Emerging Principle B
• Social workers should focus on needs directly articulated by members, and address these as critical in a time-sensitive manner. The members own their needs – not the worker.

Emerging Principle C:
• Social workers should make arrangements and work in ways that are locally rooted and responsive
Emerging Principles Continued

First Wave: Preliminary Analysis of Group Narratives
Second Wave: Preliminary Identification of Emerging Principles
Third Wave: Consultation and Revision with Self Help Groups

Emerging Principle D:
• Social workers should be flexible in ways (structure) and what (content) of their consultation.

Emerging Principle E:
• Social workers should understand and work in recognition of the SHGs’ stage of organizational development.

Emerging Principle F:
• Social workers should have knowledge about understand social networks and resources, and share this with groups as needed
Focus on DIC Kuantan in Malaysia

- Group work at the **DIC Kuantan** has been established since 1998 by men recovering from drug use.
- Committed to provide client oriented and friendly services.
- There are 14 activities; Drop-in-centre, women & children shelter, PUJI (burial assistance), rehabilitation, HIV prevention.
- Group work at the DIC Kuantan emphasizes the importance of group work in their journey to recovery.

  “We can do it, but we can’t do it alone”.
Focus on DIC Kuantan in Malaysia

Group members of DIC Kuantan and emerging principles:

• **Emerging Principle E:** Social workers should understand and work in recognition of the SHGs’ stage of organizational development
  (Reaction from group members)

• **Emerging Principle F:** Social workers should have knowledge about understand social networks and resources, and share this with groups as needed
  (Reaction from group members)

Group work among members of DIC Kuantan:

✓ http://www.thestar.com.my/story/?file=%2f2009%2f5%2f17%2ffocus%2f3921958&sec=focus
Focus on Trillium Drop in Center in United States

www.trilliumdropincenter.org

Trillium was started in 2007 by three women who live with mental illness. Our work includes providing peer support to people who live with serious mental illness in Prince William County, Virginia.

Trillium Members find

- Reduced mental illness symptoms, isolation & alienation
- Increased independence, self-esteem & empowerment
- Increased life skills & social connections
Focus on Trillium Drop in Center in United States
Tour Trillium: http://www.trilliumdropinccenter.org/video.php
Trillium and Professionals

- Staying focused on being a peer-run organization
- Discern between the focus of our mission and the desires of mental health professionals
- Collaborating with professionals on projects that fall within our mission and ability

Working on this project

- Excited and honored to be included with this project
- We felt genuine encouragement and gratitude for our participation
- Our opinions and input were taken very seriously

The Future

- We hope this project will foster the same respect & dignity that was given to us throughout this project.
Focus on Prince William County Community Services

- Prince William County, Virginia
  - Population: 422,727
  - 348 square miles
  - 35 miles south of Washington, DC

- Community Services
  - Early Intervention Services (birth to age 3)
  - Intellectual Disability Services
  - Youth and Adult Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

7969 Ashton Avenue, Manassas, Virginia, United States
(703) 792-7800  www.pwcgov.org/cs
PWCS and Self Help Groups, United States

• Prince William County Community Services Partnerships with Self Help Groups - History
  – System Transformation Initiative (Recovery Model)
  – Capacity Development
  – Community Building
  – Empowerment

• Implications of Emerging Principles in Community Partnerships
  – Applications
  – Challenges
  – Implementation
Focus on Self Help Groups in Mumbai, India

• Profile of self help group members in India
• Issues and considerations for the social group worker and professional partners
• Issues and considerations for group members
• Future potential and plans for self help groups
• Approaches from the view of a social work educator and administrator
Focus on Self Help Groups in Mumbai, India

Video by Geeta Balakrishnan, Nirmala Niketan College of Social Work
Focus on Self Help Groups in Mumbai, India

Every family has their own issues - whether it’s this or that, but they have to overcome that - that is what has motivated them to come.

Be willing to help anyone that wants to start a group. Everywhere women should start self help groups and they should start by standing on their own two feet.

Seeing them work together, all the society people are also very sensitive towards them, the entire language used by them and these people has changed. Because they have come together as a group.
Advocacy and Training Strategies

• Focus on Self Help Groups
  – Strategies for maximizing partnerships
  – Community based training

• Focus on Professional Partners
  – Education curriculum review and advocacy
  – Course and field education analysis and infusion
  – Teaching modules
  – Community based training

• Focus on Collaborative Approaches
  – Collective development of materials
  – Teaching in partnership (Experts by experience)
  – Community based training
Questions and Discussion

• Your questions?

• How do you see these reports, emerging principles and strategies in relation to your work?

• What are your ideas about expanding partnerships through practice, education, training and research?
Thank You

We look forward to continuing this conversation!

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