Facilitators working with the Multi-Family Approach

Part C
MANUAL FOR FACILITATORS

WARTRAUMA
FOUNDATION

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Acknowledgements

Collaboration

WAR TRAUMA FOUNDATION

War Trauma Foundation (WTF) was established in 1997 to provide support and opportunities for knowledge exchange in the psychosocial recovery of individuals and communities in the aftermath of war and organized violence. WTF joined the Arq Psychotrauma Expert Group (see www.arq.org) in 2011, a group linking organisations in the Netherlands that are working in the field of psychotrauma on a national and international level.

The contexts in which WTF operates are extremely complex. Individuals and communities may experience and witness interpersonal violence, terror, widespread destruction, displacement and innumerable personal losses. Conflict often fragments societies, and weakens the social fabric governing relationships and the capacity for recovery from painful experiences.

The causes of conflict may still exist and even worsen in the aftermath of violence, injustice, mistrust and deprivation. A post-conflict country may, therefore, be very vulnerable to a recurrence of violence, and may need to draw upon new and creative strategies for restoration of social bonds and psychological healing. It is here that the WTF finds its purpose: contributing to the hope, recovery and resilience of conflict-affected societies.

WTF implements programmes in partnership with national and international non-governmental organisations, academic institutions and local community groups in the Middle East, Caucasus, DR Congo, Sudan and Sri Lanka. WTF also hosts 'Intervention: Journal of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Conflict Affected Areas' and is currently Co-Chair of the IASC Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support.

FOUNDATION CENTRUM '45
Foundation Centrum 45 is the national centre for specialised diagnostics and treatment of people with complex symptoms of psychotrauma in the Netherlands. Knowledge and expertise on psychotraumatology is being developed through scientific research and shared by means of training and education.
Foundation Centrum '45 is partner of Arq, an umbrella organization for institutes and organizations in the field of psychotrauma and the consequences of experiences of violence and severe disruption.

INSTITUTE OF COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH (ICPH) – BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY
The Institute of Community and Public Health (ICPH) is one of the institutes of Birzeit University. It aims to contribute to the protection and improvement of the health of the Palestinian population through research, teaching the Master of Public Health programme, and the capacity building of public health providers and planners

Contributors to the writing of this manual

COMMUNITY BASED REHABILITATION (CBR)

The Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) program provides medical, technical and psychosocial services for handicapped people and their families. In the north of the West Bank CBR is jointly administered by three Palestinian NGOs.

- Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS) is a grassroots, community based Palestinian health organization and a member of the People's Health Movement.
- The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) is a national humanitarian organization catering to the health and welfare of the Palestinian people and others in need in the occupied Palestinian territory and the Diaspora.
- Patients Friends Society (PFS) provides public health services for Palestinian women through health education and counselling, early detection of disease through affordable health screening examinations, and by conducting research.

Sioo Interuniversitair Centrum voor Organisatie- en Veranderkunde

Mission: Sioo makes people and organisations more agile by allowing them to discover how to realise organisation and change management processes in a skilled and powerful way.

Vision: Organisations – and the people working in them – must continuously anticipate the questions they may be faced with. Their agility determines their success. The question is how to do the right thing smoothly. Sioo is convinced that knowledge and organisational and change models alone are not sufficient. People and their organisations only become truly flexible when they learn about change management processes in their own context, based on their own queries, and in conjunction with their own development. This can only be achieved by weaving real-life queries into the science of organisation and change management. This is exactly what Sioo does.

Introducing the series: 'Multi Family Approach'

This manual is designed to orient organisations, trainers and facilitators to develop and offer interventions guided by the Multi-Family Approach to vulnerable families in humanitarian settings.

The manual is structured in three parts:

A) Organisations Working with the Multi-Family Approach

B) Trainers Working with the Multi-Family Approach

C) Facilitators Working with the Multi-Family Approach

The three parts form one manual and refer to each other. The different parts can also be read and used separately by organisations, trainers and facilitators.

Introduction

The Multi-Family Approach (MFA) can help people to support themselves and each other. It will allow you, as a community worker, to establish in a structured way the support groups of families or, for instance, women's groups. Moreover, the MFA will provide you with the tools and knowledge to facilitate the type of interaction that will allow the participants to learn from each other.

This manual is part of the training in the MFA that you follow; you will find most of the theory and practical information shared, discussed and practiced during the training in this book. It is also meant as a reference book for your work in the field.

Ameenah Jabali

Um Yahya (the mother of Yahya) was suffering from huge burdens, and you could see her high psychological distress obviously on her face. She is a mother of six children, two of whom are disabled (cerebral palsy). She never had time for herself until she joined the group, and became a very constructive member. This put a smile on her face again.

In one of the sessions, the topic for the upcoming session was under discussion with the group members. Um Yahya suggested to talk about sons and adolescence, giving her own son Yahya as a good example of age-related problems. Yahya has a friend who has a bad influence on him: the friend encourages Yahya to go out most of the time until late at night; this led to poorer results at school, and he never listens to his parents' advice.

The group's suggestions to Um Yahya were:
- The son should go to work with his father at the farm, so as to stop seeing that bad friend;
- He should spend more time studying;
- She should talk to the bad friend and ask him kindly to stop seeing and talking to the son;
- She should talk with the family of that bad friend and ask them to not let their son to have any relationship with her son;
- She should try to convince the son that his friend has bad influence on him and his future.

Um Yahya took all the suggestions into consideration and promised the group to work on it with her son later on; she thanked the entire group for that support, as it helped her to overcome the problem.

Lastly, Um Yahya highlighted the fact that sometimes it's not only the problems of having disabled children at home, but the other children's problems could be even more complicated.

That was good example of social support and exchange of experience and expertise.

1

Working with families in conflict-affected areas and humanitarian settings

1.1 Working with families

Families can be considered mini-structures or networks within the society. A society struck by violence runs the risk of fragmentation, and distrust among people is counterproductive for increasing well-being and support.

Families may well be the gateway to helping societies to adjust to the new circumstances. Improved communication, support and stopping domestic violence or other destructive family processes are expected to contribute to a better quality of life for family members.

1.2 Families as experts

Family members know best. Parents are at all times responsible for their children; group facilitators don't take over that from parents. The group facilitator will enhance interactions within the groups but must accept that not only do parents know their children best, they are also to be respected for the choices they have made so far. Being a parent creates vulnerability. Generally, for most parents, it is difficult to get critical feedback from authority figures. Other fellow parents are more easily accepted as counterparts in the process of solving problems. They contribute to the process of feeling acknowledged and supported.

1.3 Working with children and parents

In general, MFA groups are intended for nuclear families, and in many occasions these involve all members who share the same household or live in the same house. Anyone with whom you share daily life (except for work or school) could be included in an MFA group. There may be good reasons, however, to decide otherwise.

Groups might consist of only parents, mothers and/or fathers, only children or teenagers, but they might also be a mixture of all these. You may have different arguments for the choice who to ask as participants. Are children able to attend at all? Does local custom allow for mixed groups of both parents? Does the problem at hand (e.g. domestic violence, autism, disability or other) require all family members to be present?

Manal Rawajbeh
The mother in our society bears the biggest burden, if not all burdens. In most cases, we find that the mother suffers from psychological distress, and sometimes she goes through a state of frustration and despair, especially when she can't find any support.

In the most activities within the groups and particularly the introductory activities, the mother is supposed to talk about her dreams and ambitions; however, she ignores herself and instead gives a high priority to her children, to talk about them and her worries about their future, and often doesn't mention anything personal about herself.

In the activity called the apple and the banana, a question was proposed to the mothers: does the mother bear the largest burdens of the family? Does the mother suffer from psychological distress? Later, this topic was discussed within the group, which reached its own outcomes and solutions.

The mother is the one who runs the entire household, in addition to taking care of the children and providing special care for the disabled child in terms of toilet training, feeding, taking him to the kindergarten or school etc., as well as maintaining a social relationship within the society. In such situations, we have to intercede and try to

convince the father and the children to be responsible and take over part of those duties; in addition, the local community should play a role in this and be responsible in their respective field of work, for example the teacher at school or kindergarten and the rehabilitation worker in terms of coordination. Further support, such as establishing a 'friendship committee', should be set up.

So the group suggested that we should help the distressed mother in terms of engaging other family members, to get them to take over part of the responsibility, so as to reduce the burden on the mother. As the saying goes: a burden shared is a burden halved.

As for the methods to persuade the husband to participate in bearing some responsibilities inside the household to help the mothers, this will depend on the group's suggestions, which should necessarily take into account the village traditions and customs. An example of this is a suggestion for the facilitator to pay a visit to the family at their house in order to involve the other family members in the search for a solution.

1.4 Working with women's groups

A choice may be made to work with women only and may be with mothers only. There is support for the notion that the development of children in vulnerable circumstances is fostered by supporting the mothers. In many communities, the mothers are the gatekeepers of the household virtues, the character and mood of the family and also its good name. Setting up groups for women may be a good choice when, within a community, they are seen as responsible for family members' well-being.

Nevertheless, it is emphasised that family groups may as well be organised for complete families – an outing, for example, can be a good opportunity for having the children and fathers to take part as well.

1.5 Working with displaced people/refugees

Displaced people and refugees need extra concern because, besides belonging to an at-risk population because of disruptive experiences in their pasts, they are particularly vulnerable due to the loss of their social support networks. In their new, temporary (although this may last for a long time) surroundings, they will build new networks. Shared personal pasts, however, have been lost, and it may be difficult to create new valuable connections. Within families, there is a risk of increased frustration and irritability, and maybe anger and aggression or depression. These may be considered

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rather normal reactions to abnormal circumstances can. Working with key persons who are trusted by these communities is necessary to involve displaced or refugee families in the MFA.

2

Understanding the MFA

The MFA[1] is an intervention for groups of families (consisting of parents or parents with children – several combinations are possible). It is a combination of group and family work, since it includes more than one (preferably more than three to be able to call it a group) family.

The MFA has been derived from Multi-Family Therapy, a method developed by the Marlborough Family Service in London (Asen, 2002; Asen & Scholz, 2010). The presence of several families at the same time offers the opportunity to work with different subsystems, for instance with parents and children separately or all together. Since the beginning of multi-family groups in the 1960s by Laqueur, they have been developed with different focuses (e.g. psychoeducation), for different target groups (e.g. adolescents with eating disorders, troubled mother–infant attachment relationships) and in various settings (e.g. schools). In general, it has been found that these groups are accepted well by the participants and lead to an increase of knowledge about the problem(s) at stake, a better collaboration with the mental health professionals or community workers and a decrease of stigmatisation. Multi-family groups have resulted in a decrease of drop-outs of sessions and of relapse and in an improvement of health conditions.

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1   This chapter has been based on a selection and adaption of Van Ee, Mooren and Kleber (2014). Van Ee, E., Mooren, T., & Kleber, R. (2014). Broken mirrors: Shattered relationships within refugee families. In: R. Pat-Horenzcyk, D. Brom and J.M. Vogel (Eds.), *Helping Children cope with trauma, Individual, family and community perspectives* (pp. 146-162). New York: Routledge.

We expect the MFA to work well for families to help them cope with enduring and multiple stresses and parenting hardships because of the following elements: a multi-family format and taking account of the particular context. We discuss these two elements next.

2.1 Multi-family format

The central idea behind the MFA is to bring together different families (or members of families) suffering from stress (traumatic or otherwise), to create connections among them and thereby to use their strengths and resources (empowerment). Creating solidarity as well as counteracting or overcoming of stigmatisation and social isolation stem from this group work and will lead to a mutual understanding and acknowledgement of a problem and of the efforts to deal with it. As a result of sharing commonalities, the self-confidence of participants can grow within a group because of the feeling of hope ('others have problems as bad or even worse') and competencies can be discovered and practiced. Mutual recognition and feedback generate social support and sharing. Group members learn from each other and provide each other with new perspectives.

The presence of several families sharing similar difficulties provides the opportunity for both family and individual work. The group creates a kind of microsociety with certain rules and values, and this elicits different aspects of the roles of the members (e.g. being a mother, daughter, sister, professional etc.). These different roles evoke various narratives that are needed to change disruptive family patterns. A group setting, in which parents and children feel comfortable and are curious to learn about themselves and others, is the basis for the exchange of beliefs. Further, family narratives reveal how certain parental beliefs have prevailed throughout different generations or in different communities. In general: telling stories helps to generate meaning to the experiences of the families and gives a sense of control.

Fathiya Abu Mazin

As a facilitator (using the MFA technique) for a group of women having autistic children, I listen carefully to them and give each mother the opportunity to express herself and talk about the problems she experiences with her child. The biggest problem they shared is how to clean their children and train them to go to the toilet instead of using nappies: this problem was proposed by some of those mothers who, until then, weren't able to give their children toilet-training, since this process can cause the autistic child some disturbance and it becomes difficult to deal with the situation.

A solution to this problem had to be found by the mothers themselves learning from each other's experience, and in this they succeeded: each mother reached a suitable solution for her child according to the child's degree of autism.

One of the examples given was the case of one mother who tried her best to take her child to the toilet. She stayed with him for eight hours, brought him all his toys, drink and food until he had finished and then rewarded him afterwards. She received encouragement from all other family members to follow this procedure again several times. Eventually, he got used to going to the toilet and no longer to use nappies. This example gave hope to other mothers and made them optimistic in finding a solution to this kind of problem.

By patience and perseverance, the mothers can help their children and help themselves to solve autistic children's problems. This example gave hope to some of the other members of the group who had not yet succeeded in toilet-training their child and they decided to try it with their autistic child.

2.2 Taking account of the particular context

In the traditional MFA, family members are invited to participate in a group session. This means bringing in the outside world while at the same time the setting remains representative of daily reality. In the group sessions, contexts for interaction are (re) created that elicit representative family interactions. Through paying explicit attention to the behaviour of families during the session, experiences are intensified and feedback of group members is used. New target parenting behaviour may be experimented with in a safe environment.

In the West Bank pilot, the MFA was adapted to the needs of Palestinian women taking care of children or other family members with a physical or mental handicap. The MFA groups provided the women with an opportunity to share problems and experiences, not only directly related to taking care of a family member with a disability but also in relation

Ola Abu Salah

At the third session of the MFA group, the mothers were asked the following question: does everybody know the objective of having group sessions? Sufficient time was given to the participants to think of the answer, through implementing an activity called the orange and the apple: this involved placing half of the participants in a group called 'orange' and the rest were 'apples'. Then, each 'apple' sat facing one 'orange', and the 'apple' talked while the 'orange' listened, and vice versa. As a facilitator, I walked around the group to hear how each was explaining the objectives.

I heard that one of the mothers, Um Ameer (mother of Ameer), was intending to send her son to one of the specialised centres for disabled people, either during the daytime or for both day and night to get better care for him. By the end of the activity, all the discussion was summarised. Then I asked Um Ameer if what I heard about sending her son to the centre was true or not. She confirmed this and explained that she thinks it's the best solution for her son to be sent to such a specialised centre. In that way, she will be relieved from the big responsibility of taking care of him. This subject was proposed to the group for discussion, taking into account that Ameer is suffering from moderate mental disability and excessive lethargy and has never been integrated into school.

To better enable the group to discuss the decision to send Ameer to the centre, whether it's a right decision or not and what are the positive and the negative aspects of doing so, I divided the group into two subgroups, using the "Fish-bowl" skills activity. Here, one group forms an inside circle and discusses the subject, while the other group forms an outside circle and listens to the 'insider' group discussion. Afterwards, the groups swap around and, in the end, re-form as one big group to summarise the discussion.

The group suggested to Um Ameer to not send Ameer to the centre as he will get worse there, since he is attached to his family and his local community. His absence for long time at the centre would detach him from his family life. Another consideration is that he will be accepted in the centre only until he turns 18 years old; then he will be sent back home – it will be big problem for him to re-engage with his

family in the future. Other mothers suggested that Um Ameer should take Ameer to a doctor to seek some medication to deal with his excessive lethargy.

Having received those suggestions, Um Ameer left the session convinced not to place her son in a specialised centre away from his family and his home environment. Also, by the end of the session, a small group of mothers decided to pay periodic visits to Um Ameer's house to see Ameer and to help Um Ameer persuade the other family members to cooperate in taking care of him. The first visit was a week after the session: the group met Um Ameer and her family and offered them some ideas and suggestions to get Ameer involved in some house work. For example, he was encouraged to help his brother change house by being given some money or being taken to a picnic. This helped the family a lot; further Ameer steadily improved and the mother was relieved of some of the burden.

to isolation, stigma or indirect consequences of the disability, for example how disability affects the dynamics among the other family members.

The MFA may be used with open or closed groups. An open group leaves room for new members and has the advantage of having senior members or families who serve as models to newcomers. Closed groups may be preferred when trust is a significant issue to members and the opportunity to create strong bonding is aimed at. The number and duration of sessions differ.

In the classic version of the MFA, several subsequent phases may be distinguished: gathering and introduction, problem-focused work, relation-focused work and relapse prevention (Asen & Bianchi, 2011).

In the West Bank pilot adaptation of the approach, the distinct phases were: forming of the support groups; performing of the groups over a period of time; finalising or diminishing the role of CBR in the sustainment of the groups.

MFA group sessions are manual-based and have a defined structure. There is an ice-breaking introductory activity, which intends to be energising, pleasant and interactive. This is followed by a core activity that usually develops around a theme that is of significance to the group. This activity is designed and prepared by the facilitator(s) and is meant to support the group in working together on a certain issue, usually one that has been brought up within the group in a previous session. The main role of the facilitator at this point is to promote interaction among families and/or individuals. Where needed, she or he zooms in and focuses on certain interactions. Other than that, the facilitator refrains

from interventions in the group activity as much as possible but remains observant of group dynamics and uses these observations in the reflection and exchange part of the session and/or in the preparation of subsequent sessions. In the reflection and exchange part of the session, the facilitator(s) needs to make sure that the group members have been able to become aware of their experiences in the session. They may have a clear idea of what was the topic and the aim of the core activity (but at times this may have been missed), what has been accomplished through the core activity (for example the members may have reached agreement or disagreement on a certain issue) and how this session related to a previous session or how it will be followed up in the next session.

The MFA may involve adults and children – but also, when working mainly with adults (as was the case in most of the West Bank MFA groups), it is important to create fun in the session, for instance by physical exercise or music making. The fun parts of the sessions are an indispensable source of stress relief for the members.

Sensitivity, in particular, is of importance to the development of the child. A warm affection, an emotional connectedness and an ability to read and respond to the cues of the child is precisely the capacity that might be hindered by stress caused by daily hazards. It is clear that fostering attuning (bring into a harmonious relationship) is an important starting point for intervention. To see one another with genuine interest and curiosity is a welcome experience for both adults and children. The frequently mentioned experience of hope fosters intimacy and growth, at the individual as well as relational level.

3
Understanding groups

In this chapter we create a common ground by introducing several aspects of understanding groups.

3.1   Dynamic systems

A group is a system

A group is a system with an underlying premise: 'the whole is greater than the sum of its parts'. A group is an entity, which has qualities that cannot be understood just by studying the individuals that make up the group. A social system consists of individuals where the behaviour of the whole cannot be derived from its individual elements or from the way these elements fit together. Rather, the opposite is true: the properties of any of the parts are determined by the intrinsic structural laws of the whole. It is like nature: when you change one element, the whole system changes.

Groups come with dynamics

Dynamics are the underlying processes that give rise to a set of norms, roles, relations and common goals that characterise a particular group. Among the members of a group, there is a state of interdependence, through which the behaviours, attitudes, opinions and experiences of each member are influenced.

The dynamics of a particular group depend on how one defines the boundaries of the group. Often, there are distinct subgroups within a more broadly defined group. For each of these groups, there are distinct dynamics that can be discussed.

The dynamics can be positive and helpful, but sometimes there is something named 'undercurrent' that is difficult to deal with but is very important. The undercurrent dynamics are individual and collective responses rooted in anxiety. Anxiety about the task: 'Do I understand it?' 'Do I want to do this?' Common responses to uncertainty and related stress are fighting or fleeing, blaming each other, waiting until 'it' is over and a dependency on the leader.

There is only one 'medicine': confront these phenomena, share your observations and set up a dialogue with the group about the source of the anxiety and what the group can do to overcome it, so as to build confidence and a sense of security.

Group formation
Group formation starts with interaction among individuals. Through interaction, individuals begin to develop group norms, roles and attitudes that define the group, which are internalised to influence behaviour.

Emergent groups arise from a relatively spontaneous process of group formation. For example, in response to a natural disaster, an emergent response group may be formed.

Formal groups or groups with a task go through a process of formation as well. Facilitators play an important role in this.

The first action in starting an MFA group is to actually create a group. This can be formed from a 'selection' of individuals and families that has a specific task: to help each other. Each group consists of members and a 'leader'. Even when working according the MFA principles, it is better if you, rather than someone else in the group, are the 'leader'. As a leader/facilitator, it is very important that you help members of the group to lead themselves. That takes some time and some special attention from you in the development of the group.

3.2 The group and the individual
The social group is a critical source of information about individual identity. An individual's identity has two components: personal identity and social identity. One's personal identity is defined by individual qualities and attributes. In contrast, one's social identity is defined by his or her group membership and the general characteristics that define the group and differentiate it from others. We naturally make comparisons between our own group and other groups, but we do not necessarily make objective comparisons. Instead, we make

evaluations that are self-enhancing, emphasising the positive qualities of our own group. In this way, these comparisons give us a distinct and valued social identity that benefits our self-esteem. Our social identity and group membership also satisfies a need to belong. Of course, individuals belong to multiple groups. Therefore, one's social identity can have several, qualitatively distinct parts (for example, one's ethnic identity, religious identity and political identity).

Black sheep effect
Beliefs within the group are based on how individuals in the group see their other members. Individuals tend to upgrade likeable members of the inner group and back away from unlikeable group members, making them a separate outer group. This is called the 'black sheep' effect. A person's beliefs about the group may be changed depending upon whether he or she is part of the inner or outer group. New members of a group must prove themselves to the full members, or 'old-timers', to become accepted.

Group structure
A group's structure is the internal framework that defines members' relations to one another over time. Frequently studied elements of group structure include roles, norms, values, communication patterns and status differentials (paragraph 7.1, which describes community workers' experiences).

'Roles' can be defined as a tendency to behave, contribute and interrelate with others in a particular way. Roles may be assigned formally, but more often they are defined through the process of role differentiation. Role differentiation is the degree to which different group members have specialised functions. Other types of roles are the socio-emotional role, which helps maintain the social fabric of the group, the individual role and leader role.

'Norms' are the informal rules that groups adopt to regulate members' behaviour. Norms refer to what should be done and represent value judgements about appropriate behaviour in social situations. Norms have a powerful influence on group behaviour.

'Values' are goals or ideas that serve as guiding principles for the group. Like norms, values may be communicated either explicitly or on an ad hoc basis. Values can serve as a rallying point for the team but can also be dysfunctional and lead to poor decisions.

Iman Daraghmeh

For the people who talk a lot in the session, the following can be helpful. Ask them to prepare and implement some entertaining activities for the group. You should also not pay too much attention to them; instead, you can maintain the flow of communication among the other participants by asking them open-ended questions, without causing any embarrassment to the talkative participant. Alternatively, you can organise such ways of working that structure the division of time to contribute to any discussion. For example:

'The subject of supporting or opposing the marriage of disabled people and its acceptance by the society was under discussion by an MFA group using the "Fish-bowl" activity. The communication was excellent among the group members; each participant expressed her opinion freely and the others listened well to each other, occupying different roles and exchanging their standpoints within the time frame of the activity, and all the participants were talking comfortably.'

At the beginning of the activity, we list the rules, which included listening well, supportive communication and giving everyone the opportunity to participate. Then the facilitator should ask open-ended questions and engage all the participants in the discussion, letting the participants ask each other questions and jointly come up with solutions.

'Communication patterns' describe the flow of information within the group, and they are typically described as either centralised or decentralised. With a centralised pattern, communications tend to flow from one source to all group members. Centralised communications allow consistent, standardised information, but they may restrict the free flow of information. Decentralised communications make it easy to share information directly among group members. When decentralised, communications tend to flow more freely, but the delivery of information may not be as fast or accurate.

'Status differentials' are the relative differences in status among group members. Status can be determined by a variety of factors, including expertise, occupation, age, gender or ethnic origin. Status differentials may affect the relative amount of play among group members, and they may also affect the group's tolerance to violation of group norms (i.e. people with higher status are given more freedom to violate group norms).

4

Facilitating groups

In this chapter, we focus both on the role of the facilitator in general and more specifically on facilitating the MFA.

4.1 The difference between leading and facilitating

Understanding facilitation begins with an awareness of the difference between facilitating and leading. It has been said that leadership is something you do to a group, while facilitation is something you do with a group.

Facilitators assist groups as they work together toward achieving group goals, and in most instances they do not interject their own personal opinions or agenda. By expressing their opinions to the group, facilitators risk discouraging others with differing opinions from speaking. They remain alert to group dynamics and encourage challenging reflection while maintaining respect and safety within the group. Although facilitators may help to guide a discussion, they also recognise and foster the group's own ability to lead itself. Good facilitators relinquish/give up control to the group and promote open, democratic dialogue among group members.

4.2 Attitude

The facilitator is not an expert

MFA groups are about eliciting personal experiences, thoughts and beliefs. All participants in a group are experts with regard to the shared difficulties. They can benefit from each other's expertise most. This requires a facilitator's attitude that is not authoritative or one-directional (telling others the 'truth') but, instead, a position that emphasises equality and curiosity. Facilitators therefore need to keep in mind that their role in the group's process is to moderate and guide communication and to withhold their own personal contributions. A more directive, controlling attitude would threaten the open sharing of thoughts and feelings. An effective way for facilitators to avoid voicing their personal opinion is to reflect questions back to the group, to ask circular questions (see paragraph 5.3), to maintain distance and to walk around or 'sit on your hands'.

Raja Alaza'ar

In fact, my experience in facilitating the session of women group and the methods I used were very simple and lacked creativity and interaction. When I started to use the MFA technique with a group of mothers having autistic children, the sessions became more creative with some of interactive activities such as the ice-breaking exercise. The training (at the public and social health centre of Berzit University) taught me new skills that I could use to make the first session very simple and friendly.

The objectives were proposed to the group for brainstorming and exchanging different standpoints in an open and interactive way rather than lecturing, so as to encourage the mothers to talk out loud about their problems in dealing with their autistic children, reaching a conclusion that the mother and her family members, and not the facilitator, should take the basic role and responsibility.

Within my role as a facilitator, I started to use such methods to make the mothers themselves identify their problems and obstacles and discuss these with their colleagues to think together to find better solutions. The skill that a facilitator should have is to promote the noncognitive technique in facilitating and managing the group, and thus it's good to have two facilitators for one group.

Be honest

Effective facilitation requires that the facilitator be honest with him- or herself and with the group. This includes being honest about the limits of one's own abilities and knowledge. If you don't know the answer to the group's questions, just admit it, say so and work on finding the answer. Honesty will lead to trust within the group and emphasise the importance of honesty from all participants. However, facilitators should be careful not to stray from presenting a neutral stance while maintaining honesty.

Everyone can learn

Feedback and reflection are regarded as important for learning; this may change one's thinking, seeing things from a different perspective for instance. This means that facilitators themselves remain open to learning from others and that everyone's contributions are treated as credible and educational. This serves to validate group members and helps to avoid arguments among them.

Other qualities of an open-minded attitude include:

- Curiosity;
- Empathy;
- Not being too formal;
- Humour;
- Be, real, direct and genuine.

4.3 Communication

Set ground rules

Ground rules establish a foundation upon which the communication within a group will occur. They help to create a safe environment in which participants can communicate openly, without fear of being criticised by others. Ground rules that have been arrived at by all members are the most useful and can be repeated if tension rises during sessions. In particular, in the beginning phase of a new group, rules or appointments need to be agreed upon. Just think of a group that you yourself have been part of. Do you recall that you needed to have some guarantees of mutual respect, definition of the group's aim etc. in order to feel comfortable? That's exactly why appointments matter. The following are some sample ground rules:

- Be honest;
- Listen, even if you disagree;
- Avoid prejudicial comments;
- Criticise the idea or behaviour, not the person;
- Pass if you're not comfortable;
- Contribute from your own perspective – don't talk for somebody else;
- Don't interrupt;

- Be brief, be concise;
- What's shared in the group is not shared outside the group – stress confidentiality;
- Agree to disagree.
- See annex V for a checklist with points of attention for dealing with values in the local context.
- Promote 'active listening'

Staying quiet and thinking about the remarks of others can be challenging when controversial topics are discussed, but these are crucial to respectful communication. Facilitators should discourage participants from professing their opinions without considering and responding to the comments of others. Instead, facilitators should model communication in the form of a dialogue, in which participants listen and respond to each other. Techniques such as circular questioning (see chapter 5.3), slowing down, rewinding and use of a 'torch' can be helpful to increase careful listening.

Encourage participation by all
Facilitators should clearly communicate that learning is an egalitarian process in which everyone has a right to speak or to choose not to speak. Group members who have not spoken should be encouraged to do so, if they wish. Facilitators may invite all participants to speak by giving turns, by going along the circle (please watch out: this may be boring) or by working in subgroups.

> **Wisam Khatatbeh**
> In one of the (MFA) group sessions, in Bait Fourek, the women discussed the subject of girls' education. Some of those women were against it: they claimed that a girl will end up getting married and her duties would be then to take care of her husband and children; thus, there is no point to invest in her education, as it is useless for her. This started a debate within the group, as those with the opposite opinion emphasised the importance of educating girls for many reasons. One of these is that, in the Palestinian community, the men might be detained or killed, leaving the family behind; if the wife was not educated, she would not be able to take over the responsibility of raising her children without support from relatives and society. After much mutual and respectful debate, the latter group convinced the first group that education is important for girls.

Work in subgroups
To increase active participation by all, dividing the group into subgroups, who for a brief period of time work together or share thoughts, often serves as a good instrument.
You may have reasons how to organise the subgroups (e.g. have teams work together)

or you cluster participants randomly. For instance, by dividing the group into 'apples' and 'oranges' or numbers. Bringing back the results of the subgroups in the whole group is effective in sharing all ideas. In large groups, this needs to be brief; otherwise, participants will become distracted and there will be (too) much repetition. And keep in mind: it is the (interactional) process that matters most, not so much the result.

Use 'vibes watchers'
In order to monitor ground rules, the facilitator may choose to identify one or more 'vibes watchers'. Your co-facilitator may also fulfil this role. The vibes watcher observes the group and monitors group dynamics that are potentially problematic. She/he can interrupt the discussion if the situation is particularly problematic and explain, in a nonaccusatory tone, what she/he observed. At the conclusion of the session, the facilitator should ask for a report from the vibes watcher, so that future session may be improved. Ideally, all members of the group will become sensitive to group dynamics and, in a sense, monitor themselves. Two facilitators working with one group may also take turns in monitoring the group process.

Use 'stacking'
In order to promote full participation, the facilitator can guide the allocation of speaking time by 'stacking' (or 'queuing'). This involves the facilitator identifying and placing in some order those individuals who wish to speak.

Other practices for effective communication include:

DO:
• Use open-ended questions (not 'Should the welfare system be reformed?', but 'What aspects of the welfare system would you change?');
• Ask for specifics and examples;
• Paraphrase and summarise ('So what you're concerned about is who defines what's best for these communities?');
• Acknowledge contributions;
• Redirect questions to the group ('What do you think?'; 'Anyone else who has an idea?'; 'Who agrees/disagrees with this?'; 'What are the advantages or disadvantages of this point of view?').

Or add examples closer to the programme:
• Be creative;
• Take some risks by posing provocative questions.

DON'T:
- Refute people's ideas;
- Put people on the spot;
- Downplay thoughts, feelings;
- Force people to speak.

Besides a specific attitude and ways to elicit open interaction and communication, there are some skills that characterise the MFA. These are:
- Sitting on your hands;
- Increasing 'mentalisation' (see chapter 5.1) by using a five-step model;
- Caring for yourself and your team (like you want participants to take care of others).

These are described below.

4.4 Dealing with challenging situations

Two community workers from the West Bank share their experiences of how they dealt with challenging situations in working with MFA groups.

Iman Odeh

How does the facilitator manage difficult situations in an MFA group?

What do I do with a person who would like to leave the group?

What I can is to promote and strengthen her passion for the group, by:

* Explaining that the main objective for forming the group is that the participants are here to support each other in finding joint solutions to different issues with high confidentiality;
* Assigning a particular role to the woman and ask her to do a certain activity, so as to make her feel that she is an important member in the group;
* Give the woman homework to prepare; this gives her a commitment to attend the next session;
* Give her a greater amount attention, listen to her carefully and encourage her to participate.
* What do I do with a person dominating the group?

I have experience in this matter: one mother was dominating the group, as she was well equipped with information about her autistic child, trained him well at home and succeeded in reaching remarkable progress dealing with this issue. She gave her input to the group based on her own experience, while I, as rehabilitation worker, understood that her personal desire in doing that was to gain compliments and admiration. What should I do?

I tried tactfully to direct some questions to other participants and let them give their opinions about the subject and about what would they do in a situation similar to that mother. I tried my best to divide the roles among all the participants so that they could take part without giving the full attention to that woman. Also I confirmed to all participants the crucial rule of the session in terms of listening to each other's opinions respectfully.

It's also possible to give that woman enough time at the beginning of the session to unload all that she has to tell, to avoid repeating herself later on during the session.

How to deal with a shy person in the group?
I had faced such an example of a shy woman in my group, who was naturally very withdrawn and kept quiet during the session, with no contact with the other participants. We engaged her in a get-acquainted activity, in which each participant expressed herself in terms of her dreams and ambitions by drawing something that reflected her personality.

The exchange of experiences and sharing successful stories among the group of mothers having autistic children could also be possible to make that shy woman realise that she is not the only one having this problem, and they all are in the same boat: here are other mothers having the same problems – they talk about their situation freely and they still can laugh and communicate with others without any shame or embarrassment.

Another solution was the ice-breaking activity (group singing), which made that woman sing loudly and laugh, free of shyness.

Another possible option is to give that mother longer time, say two or three sessions, to interact with the group and to observe how she is doing after spending time with the group; she will learn that there is no harm in expressing her feelings, talking out loud about her problems and participating in 'let-go' activities.

How to deal with an uncommitted person in the group?
- At the beginning we should clarify that the objective of forming the group is to exchange experience and expertise among mothers and to give support to each other.
- List the achievements of the group.
- Give assignments to the uncommitted woman to prepare some activities for the group.
- Arrange for a session to take place at that woman's house.
- Try to determine the reason behind her being uncommitted to the group; ask her what things could be done to make the session interesting for her.
- Ask the other participants to talk about the positive effect of attending the session, on a psychological, family and social level.
- Have some entertaining activity outside the session.

Nabeela Ahmed
How to deal with challenges surrounding the group?

At the first session of the MFA group, we all noticed that one of the participants was absent because her husband doesn't allow her to go outside the house. The rest of the group discussed this matter among themselves, and they decided that the next session should take place at that woman's house. One of the participants proposed the suggestion and asked for permission from that woman and her husband, and the response was very positive. The woman was very much pleased that she was not left alone and behind; she also greatly appreciated the nice gesture of the other participants, showing that they thought about her.

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5

Facilitating
MFA groups

Facilitating MFA groups requires some special skills, connected to the core concepts of MFA.

5.1 Facilitating mentalisation

One of the cornerstones of the MFA is the importance of 'mentalisation'. This can be defined as the ability to distinguish and to see one's own and the other person's mind as separate perspectives (having one's mind in mind). The concept is grounded in attachment theory. Being capable of mentalising contributes to the development of sensitivity and a good attachment relationship among adults, parents and children and will eventually lead to a healthy increase of autonomy, the sense of being an independent individual having own thoughts, wishes and actions. Viewing different perspectives and being curious about differences rather than similarities offers freedom of thinking. Reduction of problems and symptoms is achieved by allowing oneself to think differently, to see more alternatives than just the dominant idea. To increase mentalising capacities and parental emotional availability, the group can be used for 'mirroring' purposes and can be encouraged to offer feedback. If, for example, the group is composed of parents and children, parents may be encouraged to coach each other when interacting with their child. In some activities, parents are invited to play with children other than their own, thereby increasing their critical observation and curiosity. The mirroring refers to giving back information on what is observed in a person's emotional expression, gestures or behaviour. The observed behaviour is being put into words.

Understanding facial/emotional expressions

Our facial expressions mirror our emotions. 'Reading' these expressions provides an understanding of the intents and emotional states of a person. When asked, most people pay much attention to the eyes. The eyes inform us best about our feelings. This seems to be universal. Mutual understanding and bonding therefore is fostered by proximity, attention and observing the other person. This is valid for children as well as adults.

Iman Odeh

Example: How to swap places with others and how to make this work in a women's group?

At first, it is hard to place yourself in someone else's shoes, but you'd love it once you try it, as you may adapt the technique and apply it to your own life. It enables you to feel and sense the person before you, as one day you might experience the same thing: in spite of feeling happy or sad, you might need help and support from others and realise the gravity of the problem you go through.

I'm Iman...

I never knew the importance of this technique, until my first session, when a mother of an autistic child had to tell her story, saying she had to give away her child to a shelter in another suburb. She had her reasons to do so: she was pregnant; she was not able to hold the child, train him or take care of his needs. All the other women attacked her loudly and with harsh words. They accused her of being a heartless and ruthless mother: she should take the child back and out of the shelter. They were so hard and harsh that she was left tongue-tied and deeply hurt. Hence, I put myself, as well as the other mothers, in her shoes and tried to see the reasons why she took such a decision, such as the influence her family had on that mother and the severity of her child's disability. I asked the other mothers about what would they do if they were in her place? The intention was to smooth the rough edges of the arguments and make them less offensive and also to collect new ideas and solutions for the mother of the autistic child. The more you embody the person before you and feel her/his agony and needs, the better you can influence the group and obtain useful results, so I embrace this technique in all my forthcoming sessions.

The regulation of emotions (feeling sad, angry, happy, joyful or ashamed for instance) and the management of stress and arousal are impacted by monitoring the needs of another person. Social support is dependent upon feeling understood, acknowledged and validated by another person. Creativity, fantasy and thinking 'outside the box' occur only when arousal and energy are optimal and a sense of safety is being experienced.

There are many different ways that mentalising is activated or evoked. We give some examples: the use of a 'brainscan' drawing (put on paper what you think the person opposite of you is thinking, feeling or wishing); playing a game of memory cards (young children are very good at this); choosing and giving postcards (or other visual material) that you think the other person will appreciate most – and tell why. Role-play and identification exercises can be helpful as well.

Increasing mentalising: the OCECE technique

One of the key elements of MFA is to increase the capacity for and use of mentalising. Easily put: to see oneself through the eyes of the other. An example of the importance of this capacity can be seen in the videoclip 'Still face' (see YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apzXGEbZht0). When the mother shows a blank still face, an expression without any involvement with or emotion toward her baby, the baby's distress clearly increases. When she returns to her normal, responsive state and mirrors the baby's internal state, the baby immediately calms. As social beings, we employ this intuitively and naturally. Using mentalising in groups challenges us to make this explicit (rather than implicit). By making it explicit, participants will feel acknowledged and respected. Mutual understanding increases and the risk for conflict reduces.

A sequence of steps to establish mentalising is OCECE, in the following steps:
- Observe – 'I see you are about to cry'.
- Check – 'Do I see that right?'; 'Do others see this as well?'
- Evaluate – 'Is this what you want?'; 'What are the advantages and what are the disadvantages?'
- Choose alternatives, change – 'What could be the alternatives'; 'How would you like to respond?'
- Experiment – 'What do you need to practice it?'; 'How can you be sure it works better?'; 'Do you need "a fly on the wall"?'

When you have stopped at a certain interactive moment, you can start with Observe. You may say: 'I see this is happening, do I see this right?'. Next you check whether this is your personal observation or do others agree; did they see this as well? Evaluation involves weighing whether this is what the participant(s) want to happen: what are the advantages, what are the disadvantages of the particular approach? What alternatives are possible? Choose one and finally, in the last step, you may ask the participant(s): 'Is it okay for you to exercise the alternative way?' 'What do you need to really try it?' 'Who can help you with that?'

These five steps help you to deal with subsequent aspects of change. For many of us, change of behaviour is very difficult. We feel comfortable in our daily behavioural patterns.

For change to occur, it is therefore needed to make people aware and further to make them choose and offer opportunities for different ways to deal with a situation.

Again, applying the five-step model requires practice, much practice! Please feel encouraged to continuously seek for opportunities to just try it in your groups.

5.2 'Sitting on your hands'

A crucial aspect of the MFA is to 'sit on your hands'. This means that, as a facilitator, it is your responsibility to set the scene, to facilitate interactions among family members and, at times, to create some pressure – so people do interact. Once participants (these may be complete families, or mothers or youth) interact (during a game or activity), the facilitator remains on the outside; in the words of Asen and Scholz (2010), the facilitator 'flies around like an eagle'. As a facilitator, you are not part of the group. Your position as an outsider will make it possible to observe, to mirror (communicate about what you see) and thereby to help participants with any difficulties they encounter.

Using the words 'I' and 'we' when talking to the group should alarm you. This may reflect your tendency to seek a joint responsibility, while the aim is to increase each participant's sense of responsibility and autonomy.

Ideally, there are two facilitators in each session. When you want to use videotaping and feedback and you are allowed to do so, a third colleague may come in handy. In any case, it is important to be clear about the division of roles beforehand. Who is in charge of what part of the session? Do you sit next to each other or across from each other when in the group? (Preferably across from each other, to maximise the scope.)

5.3 Natural curiosity

The general stance a facilitator should have is one with curiosity. One can take a 'not-knowing stance'. The idea is to be truly wanting to grasp and understand what the other person is telling. Curiosity invites people to tell more about their lives. In order to be curious, open-ended questions are helpful:
• What do you think?
• How do you feel?
• How are your thoughts about…?

In order to increase group interaction you can use the following questions:
• Can you ask your neighbour what her experiences are?
• Listening to this response, what do you think?

Circular (indirect) questions facilitate connection within a group as well:
• What do you think your son thinks about that?
• What would your mother say to that?
• If you would ask your daughter this, what would she say?

5.4 Caring for yourself and each other

Being available for others, in particular for those who are in vulnerable circumstances, is rewarding work but at times demanding as well. It is not very often the kind of work that offers the highest salaries; great efforts are rewarded by other merits. Nevertheless, efforts and gains should be in proper balance. It is part of teamwork to monitor that in each other.

Besides seeing to it that your colleague is well, which is important, it is crucial for the effectiveness of the MFA (or any other intervention) that there are team meetings on planning, performing and looking back on MFA sessions. As group participants all have different perspectives, so do team members. These are important to evoke and use.

It is therefore wise to create time to first of all plan a session together. What is the aim of the specific session and what do you want to establish? Who is doing what part of the session? Looking back on the session, it will help you to critically (and constructively) evaluate what you saw happening. Intercollegial consultation and supervision will be needed to keep track: are you still working according to MFA guidelines? What are the difficult parts? What are the advantages or disadvantages in continuing like this or that? Only in this way is expertise being built up; confidence in working with this method will grow, as does the capacity to share the expertise with others. The point emphasised here is that you need to be critical and constructive in monitoring your work. The opportunity to make mistakes is vital. In a team where there is trust and the wish to learn from experiences, there is more fun.

Tips on how to monitor each other and procedures that need to be in place to function as a good team when facilitating a MFA group are given in the following box.

Nahreez Aoufi

How can you work jointly with your facilitator colleague in preparing and managing the group session.

First: The session should be planned beforehand together with the supervisor and the rehabilitation worker in terms of dividing the time and the roles, the activities, the topics and the opening and the closure of the session.

Second: There should be optimal constant communication between the supervisor and the rehabilitation worker during the session.

Third: The two facilitators should be seated so as to allow good communication and the smooth exchange of gestures between them.

Fourth: The supervisor should continuously support the rehabilitation worker by various means.

Fifth: Roles should be swapped in a very flexible way during the session.

Sixth: A spirit of cooperation between the two facilitators should be shown.

Seventh: The two facilitators should move among the participants to take notes.

Designing and facilitating sessions

6.1 Designing and facilitating a session

Each MFA session has a similar same set-up, with three basic elements. We will discuss them here. In the upcoming chapters, we go more in-depth on the specific dynamics of each phase in the MFA cycle, and we will introduce concrete ways of working and exercises fitting in each phase. The three phases of the MFA cycle are: the start-up phase, the performing phase and the finalisation and closure phase (see chapters 7, 8 and 9, respectively).

At the end of the manual, examples of activities that may be used are being outlined (annexes I, II and III). It is important, however, to emphasise that adding new exercises, monitoring the efficacy and using your own creativity is most important. This is not a cookbook with fixed 'recipes'.

Further, there are characteristics of the way of running a session, partly associated with the attitude of the facilitator: create a high-pressure working atmosphere, make use of subgroups and include reflective thinking.

6.2 Structure of a MFA session

MFA sessions, either in open or closed groups, have a certain order of activities. Elements in each session are:

a. Ice-breaker;
b. Core activity related to the goal;
c. Reflection.

(a) Ice-breakers are employed to accomplish an adequate level of energy and arousal within the group. That is, in an agitated, highly aroused group, the choice may be for an attentive, low-level-energy activity, whereas in a group with people who tend to be laid-back and who present themselves as low in energy, an energiser activity may serve better.

(b) The core activity has been planned to induce interactions among members of the groups. This may be within subgroups, for instance role play with an inner and an outer circle of participants. Or working in four subgroups in different corners in the room.

(c) Reflection may be stimulated and achieved within the whole group or within the subgroups at hand. There is no fixed rule here, and different exercises are available as examples to elicit reflective thinking. For instance: make a list (on a flip chart) of different opinions. The aim is then repetition, overview and memorising. This adds to the chance of implementation ('taking home').The aim of reflection in general is to facilitate integration of thoughts and ideas and to stimulate new ideas. This is what learning is about.

6.3 Facilitating interaction and process: how do you work?

There are characteristics of the MFA that may be different from other interventions that you know. That is, in the MFA you work at high speed, make use of subgroups and, as a facilitator, you 'sit on your hands'. The process within a group is most important; your task is to maximise interaction among group members. When your participants interact, the subsequent step is mentalising. How to accomplish mentalising is described in chapter 5.

Work at high speed

Working at a rather high speed serves different purposes. When both adults and children are involved in the groups, the high speed avoids especially children getting bored. In the case of groups with adults, the relatively high turnover of exercises and activities causes some pressure – there is little time to think about problems. The use of deadlines 'enforces' the production (of thoughts, plans, decisions etc.). This usually increases thinking activity and helps the group members to focus.

Involve all subgroups

Working with a group provides you with the opportunity to create subgroups. Working with subgroups has the advantage to involve all in the activity at hand. It is like working together by sharing and dividing the task. In the case that you are about to include everyone or every subgroup, don't skip one – this will cause a feel of neglect.

Ola Abu Salah

I will talk about Hala's story; Amal, I will introduce you to Hala.

Hala is 38 years old and lives in a suburban area of Junain city with her mother, who suffers from difficulty in movement and speech as a result of stroke. Hala permanently takes care of her mother and helps her with her life activities, taking her to hospital and monitoring her treatment at home. Hala cannot afford her mother's treatment expenses as she is dedicating her entire time to her mother and doesn't work, but takes the required money from her brothers.

Hala is a member of the MFA group, and she attends all the group sessions. Her psychological and financial status was discussed by the group during one session. The group's suggestion is that she should work and earn some money, but Hala wondered what kind of work she can do because she didn't finish her studies.

The group then suggested that she pick mallow or thyme, or even to wrap cigarettes. In the following session, we discovered that Hala already had started working, wrapping cigarettes at home, which indicated that she gained some useful ideas and a great deal of support from the group.

By that, the group succeeded in solving part of Hala's problem, in a very simple way yet fruitful for Hala, as she is doing some work and earning some money while she is still taking care of her mother at home.

7

The start-up phase of MFA groups

7.1 Composition of a group

Most situations in postconflict areas and humanitarian settings are far from ideal. Circumstances force you to be practical, pragmatic and positive. A new MFA programme may best be introduced into existing structures of (mental) health facilities. It is easiest to involve those people who are already concerned with the lives of vulnerable groups within societies. They are your key persons.

Further, working with groups will mean that you need access to a room of reasonable size, and you may need permission from local authorities to organise the meetings. In general, the authorities will appreciate efforts that increase the cohesion within a community and that foster inclusion, rather than exclusion, of vulnerable groups.

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Hala Bani Aoudah
The location where the session takes place is very important and a basic requirement. It ought to be quiet, comfortable and safe. Attention should be paid to customs and culture. The location should be central, if possible, from a geographical point of view. Also, preparing material for the session is essential, as well as prior agreement for time and location of the session.

The facilitator should communicate and confirm the next session to all participants; to avoid any confusion and duplicate booking, a prior reservation should be made for the session in the municipality/town hall, if all participants agree that the session should take place at the municipality.

In my case, logistically, Tamoun municipality hall is the best example of all the above: it is safe, comfortable and easy to book because of the prior coordination with the municipality, as the facilitator is a municipality employee. Also, if we miss out or the hall was already booked by a third party, we can organise another location belonging to the municipality or another local institution in town. So, as an MFA facilitator, it is important to maintain your network in order to arrange facilities for your groups.

These are a few of the many decisions that you need to make when preparing a new MFA group. In this chapter, some of these choices are outlined. In all cases, a new group will need to be embedded in local (health) structures.

Jihan Alshouli
Forming the group

To form a group of mothers using the MFA technique, the objectives and certain other criteria should be set.

The group was formed based on mothers with different types of disabled children, with a small number of participants from the same neighbourhood.

The group members were contacted and invited to a particular time and place for the first session.

The rehabilitation worker should prepare beforehand a plan for the first interview with some introduction activities; also the objectives should be discussed with the group, paying high attention to their ideas and suggestions, and finally to get their feedback on the overall session. By the end of the session, the time and place for the following meeting should be determined.

The rehabilitation worker should prepare for the following session in a very creative way, as she learned when training for the MFA technique. She should never go back to common old techniques but should make each session different from the previous ones, with new topics and activities.

Also the rehabilitation worker should not show bias and should avoid imposing any information on the group; on the contrary, she should collect information from them.

The location of the session and the topics to be covered by the session should be suitable for all the participants to guarantee their attendance.

Working as a team
The aim is to create a safe oasis for families, women or children to interact with others and to experiment with new perspectives and behaviour. Your team, therefore, has to be perceived as safe and constructive as well. So, working on a plan for families to meet involves working out a parallel schedule for teamwork as well. You need to divide tasks, organise a planning meeting and choose a moment for evaluation purposes after a session. Most important, team members should feel inspired, encouraged and safe to do the work. If you are not confident about this, who can you turn to for help or assistance?

Selection and bringing people together

Although MFA groups use contrasts and differences (of opinion, attitudes, behaviour, customs, looks) among persons, a group starts with a shared, common characteristic. For instance, MFA groups involve families with experiences of domestic violence, with teenagers with eating difficulties or with children with a disability or autism-spectrum disorder.

Some groups may include people who are interested in being in the group but who do not really share the same problem; however, they are of the same culture and same village, and this helps to encourage integration. At times there will be less focus on the shared problem of the group, but discussion may nevertheless evolve about other types of problems that the group members also experience. This may be valid and worthwhile for the participants. In short, the discussion doesn't always need to evolve around the core theme (e.g. a child with autism-spectrum disorder): direct and indirect consequences of difficulties may be important topics as well.

The group sessions do not have the aim to lead to solutions as such. A good session helps people to interact, and this process is a learning experience for group members. Solutions to concrete problems may follow later.

Open and closed groups

Groups may have an open or closed character. Open groups have people leave and enter (almost) continuously; closed groups start and remain with the same persons. The introduction of new members to a group demands special attention. It may be exciting for new members to enter. Facilitators will then need to spend time to ensure that the participants get to know each other and to take care that the newcomers are familiar with group agreements, procedures etc.

Sequence of a group process

As in all kinds of groups that meet for a period of time, there is a sequence of stages in group development or process. All groups go through a time of bonding, performing and finalising. The first stage of a group focuses on the bonding of group members. The opportunity to feel safe is important and is facilitated by having clear guidelines on how to interact with each other (rules or agreements). Clarity about the aim of the group and about what can be expected from the programme (and at the same time also what cannot be taken care of) lays the ground for constructive group work.

7.2 Tasting

Before the real start of a new group, it may be worthwhile to organise an information meeting in order to get people on board and let them experience what an MFA group is like. During this meeting, you present yourself, get to know each other and present details about the programme and the working format, including time schedule etc.

Because people usually find it rather exciting to join such an event but nevertheless are anxious, it is important to create an informal atmosphere where, first of all, there is clear information and, second, it is an occasion for informal interaction. Food and beverages are helpful to make people feel comfortable. In order to support people to decide whether they choose to join or not, it is helpful to invite a participant of an earlier MFA group and have him/her tell experiences.

Rudaina Abu Jarad
One day, Amal, a social worker, asked for my help in how to choose the right timing for the first session with a group of women and how to develop the programme of the session using the MFA technique.
I advised her to discuss the right timing and the suitable place with the women themselves, so as to guarantee their attendance. `
For example, it should be at 10 o'clock in the morning and avoid any holidays or days off like Saturday, and the place should be with access to disabled people in case one of the participants has special needs.

As for the programme, the first part is to thank the women for their interest in attending the session. Then highlight the importance of their attending all the upcoming sessions and participating during the session, so that everyone benefits from it.

Start the session with an introductory activity: explain and facilitate this activity first, then choose an ice-breaking activity and make sure of everyone's participation,

It's better to have two facilitators working together helping each other during the session, also to ensure that the participants avoid boredom.

Then the objectives should be discussed with the group, to brainstorm the topics of the next session; also, once again discuss and agree with them about the following session's place and time. The session can be finalised by thanking the particpants for their attendance.

7.3 Getting a group started
The first steps and activities after starting a group focus on establishing a working climate. That is an atmosphere where participants get to know each other, feel safe enough to share stories and insecurities and can work out some difficulties.

These steps and activities therefore include:
- Getting acquainted with each other;
- Formulating the aim of the participants and the group;
- Safety regulations – agreements, rules;
- Getting acquainted with the working method.

Getting acquainted with each other
There are different ways to get to know each other better. The first start usually is to learn each other's names. The ball game (see annex I) is an easy method to exchange names. Variations may be used to share more information (e.g. ask for the background of names, favourite hobbies, meals, places where one was born, lives, ages of children etc.). The variations in fact are numerous.

Another nice way to get to know each other is to have participants organise the group in the room according to principles such as geographical distance, height or other characteristics that group members come up with.

Talking about goals
Because these meetings are quite different from what the group members are used to, it is important that the facilitators explain – and every now and then repeat – to the group what the idea behind these groups is.

Namely, to provide a space and opportunity where group members can:
- Spend time together, 'knowing that you are not alone in a difficult situation';
- Laugh and have fun (stress-relief);
- Share stories in relation to the core theme (e.g. disability) but also about what the problem means for the rest of the family;
- Share experiences and ideas on how to deal with issues related to the core theme but also issues in relation to other children, yourself, other members of the family or your community;
- Sometimes feel that you are able to help others with your experience;
- Sometimes feel that you learn from others who face similar challenges.

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Nahreez Aoufi
The group was formed and the time was set for the first session of the MFA group. After the introduction, I took the initiative to ask the mothers about their experiences with their children and families that they could share during the session with other participants.
Then I asked whether they liked the session topics and whether it was of much benefit for them or not. Their answers showed how pleased they were with what they had heard during the session, and they asked for more free time to get along with other participants in a friendly environment. In addition, they need more psychosocial support because of their stressful lifestyle with their disabled children and being troubled with other economical and social burdens that the whole family is carrying.

The sessions shall keep running with high confidentiality, and all the participants have agreed on this policy. The participants are expecting to learn new skills to help them to manage their family life, and for this, they are eager to continue to attend the following sessions.

Safety regulations: agreements, rules
For a group to be a safe place to exchange and discuss difficulties, it is crucial to create a set of rules or agreements from the beginning. Some of these agreements are basic to any group, such as:
• Information shared in the group is not talked about outside the group;
• Pay respect to everyone in the group; that is, listen carefully and let anyone speak;
• Be on time and start on time. Also, end on time.

It works best when there is agreement on the set of rules for the group. As a facilitator, you may well have an idea about certain rules beforehand (e.g. foods and drinks during break etc.). A way to have a list of agreements is to divide the group in subgroups and ask them to come up with at least three agreements they find important. Returning to the large group, you (or one of the participants) sums up which contributions are considered significant by consensus and write them on a flip chart sheet.

Getting acquainted with the working method
Right from the start, working methods are employed that characterise the MFA, that is they put pressure on the group to interact (activities that are brief in duration), involve all (work in subgroups) and elicit new perspectives and experiences (sharing and seeking common or contrasting points of view). Being consistent from the start in your attitude as a facilitator ('sitting on your hands'; refraining from being an expert) helps participants to get accustomed with the group very quickly. They will experience that the group is their time and place where they can share experiences and find support.

8

Performing phase

Once a group has got started, and participants have become familiar with the way of working, the next stage sets in: sessions that evolve around the difficulties that participants share. For instance, taking care of a child with disability, autism or domestic violence. In the groups with families, with parents and children present, the focus is on (improvement of) the interpersonal relationships. These may be parent–child, parent–sibling, child-sibling or family relationships and community relationship in general. In groups of women or youngsters for instance, core themes may be coping with stress and difficulties, relaxation, women's rights or any other subject that participants find important.

Nabeela Ahmed

In one of the sessions with a group of mothers having autistic children, Um Ahmed (the mother of Ahmed) was so upset and crying for her son, because she couldn't find any kindergarten in the village to accept him because of his disabilities.

The rest of the group showed empathy to Um Ahmed and they started to discuss the matter, to finally agree to go together to the mayor to ask his help; he then wrote to the kindergarten's management but with no success. Hence, the group decided to go to the Directorate of Education, which responded efficiently to Um Ahmed and promised to help her in integrating Ahmed with his fellows in the kindergarten. Following this, the Directorate organised a workshop targeting the managers of the schools and kindergartens to emphasise the importance of integrating disabled children into schools. The manager at the Directorate asked Um Ahmed to provide him with a medical report for Ahmed to see if his health status meets the admission criteria.

The group will keep following up the matter with the Directorate of Education.

8.1 Defining targets

MFA groups are target oriented. The advice is to discuss targets or aims with participants. The purpose is to make group members aware of the changes that they wish in order to improve their circumstances. Changes should be feasible; there is of course a difference between solvable and unsolvable problems. It can be worthwhile to distinguish these. There are different ways to achieve clear and concise goals.

One possible activity is to draw a tree on a large sheet of paper and put lower- and higher-order goals (for instance, with sticky memos) on the branches. The resulting trees can best be kept to return to in the final phase of the group.

Another possibility is to make a body map; for instance, have participants draw the contours of each other one by one, for example by standing against the wall. The next step is to put on the resulting map the difficulties one experiences in different parts of the body. This exercise may help to make an inventory of the problems at hand.

8.2 Working around core themes

As in the early phase of forming a group, the activities employed in the 'performing' sessions share as characteristics: high pressure, maximum interaction, evoking stories using the not-knowing stance and circular questioning, and making an inventory of shared or different perspectives. As to the kind of exercises used, there is no rule here – all creativity is useful. It will be helpful to prepare sessions carefully and organise materials. Some of examples so far are given in the following box.

Maha Hawari

We formed a (MFA) group of mothers with autistic children, from three places close by within Nablus province. Sessions were launched at one of the municipalities and received a great deal of attention from the senior citizens; the mothers were sort of hesitant and worried at the beginning because they didn't know each other.

One of those mothers was very enthusiastic but was not able to attend the sessions, as she was under pressure from her husband and his family. We suggested to go to her house and she welcomed the idea. The group built a good rapport as they are all in the same boat; each one of them gave her best in terms of skills and achievement. They communicate via electronic social networks and telephones.

Regarding the practices, there was a break-the-ice activity and a getting-acquainted activity, which consisted of games: every mother wrote on a sheet of paper her name, age, number of children, dreams, favourite dish and destination, and inserted it in a balloon. That practice was some kind of an outlet for those mothers, right from blowing up the balloon to talking at ease about themselves. Another ice-breaker activity is '7 up', which depends on being focused and vigilant: the mothers count up to 7 and, at the count of 7, put their hands on their heads and say '7 up'; she who doesn't do this, loses, and she cannot continue. Those activities are fun and add delight to the sessions; in addition, the members of the group compete in a sportsmanlike way and with laughter.

Accordingly, those activities build stronger bonds among those mothers through thick and thin, and enable them to share their own grief and sorrow. We were able to maintain good relations through periodic sessions, setting new activities and laying out new topics and suggestions from within the group, so the mothers feel responsible for each other as well as for the group.

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The final phase and closure

Groups are never endless. Often, a fixed number of sessions is agreed beforehand. Finances may be the most important reason to motivate the number of meetings. Then again, (parts of) groups may continue their meetings and social support network after the ending of the formal sessions organised by facilitators. As a facilitator, employed by a community, you may need to direct your attention to new groups and help other women, youth or families to help each other.

9.1 Components of the final phase of a group

The final phase of a group is as important as its start. The activities that belong to these sessions are:
- Looking back on goals and changes that have occurred;
- Actions needed to maintain the gains and to prevent reversion to the old situation;
- Saying goodbye.

Looking back on goals and changes that have occurred
Although this may not be necessarily restricted to the final sessions, it is good to return to the goals that were formulated at the start of the group and realise the changes. In particular, the process of change may be good to be aware of; that process can be helpful in future problem-solving. Of course, a negative result may be the case as well. Then too, making up the balance may result in the conclusion that another kind of help is (also) needed.

Actions needed to maintain the gains and prevent reversion to the old situation
Awareness of the ways in which the group process has been helpful for the participants can help to make plans for future actions.

Saying goodbye
We emphasise the importance of 'celebrating' the goodbye. The focus on separating is as important as getting acquainted. This provides the opportunity for feedback on personal qualities, gifts and supportive messages.

There are endless ways of setting this up. One of the possibilities is to ask the group to make a collective drawing of a fantasy figure that reflects all the qualities represented in the group. Or ask each member to bring something that symbolises the meaning of the group to that person. Of course, all participants should be invited to share their stories.

9.2 Continuation of a group

Sometimes, participants want to continue their group and organise their meetings themselves. It is crucial to have your responsibilities clear. You don't want to be held responsible for group interactions that are outside your realms of influence. This is not to say that you cannot be supportive of groups that want to continue meeting. For instance, you can appoint a contact person in the group who may consult you. Another way may be the organisation of booster sessions or reunion meetings. In short, as a facilitator, you'll have to manage and communicate the clear expectancies that both you and the group members have.

Fathia Abu Mazin
After I've spent months and years of periodic sessions and meetings with the MFA group, sharing with them their joys and sorrows, the participants will be enabled to take the lead of the group by themselves. In this case, if the facilitator leaves, then the group will continue to prepare and plan for sessions and activities to solve their problems and to play an effective role in the society, to push for solving their children's problems by contacting the local agencies to respond to their demands.

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Keeping up to standards as a professional

For a professional, only part of his/her learning takes place in trainings and workshops. The most important place for learning is practice and learning from practice. You can learn a lot by doing. The MFA training has no final exam or test that, upon passing, gives you the guarantee of ongoing successful group meetings. Success is built on practice and experience and using your personal talents in practice. In order to learn for practice and become step by step a more senior professional in the MFA, some procedures need to be installed and some professional habits created.

1. See every meeting as equally important and give it your full attention in preparation, carrying out and evaluation, as if doing it for the first time. Over time, this will become easier on certain aspects. That's normal; then it is time to focus on details and the more nitty-gritty things that make a difference between a good session and an excellent session.

2. Benefit from the fact you are working in teams of facilitators in a meeting: do the preparation and evaluation together; keep on asking each other questions. Be curious: why does your college wants to start with this energiser and not with another? Why did she put so much energy in the question of participant X? Asking each other questions helps you to make the implicit explicit, not only for the other person but also for yourself. Behind each question is a whole world of assumptions and rules of thumb!

3. In the evaluation–reflection session that the two of you have, spend as much time on the things that went well as on the things that could improve. Try to determine what are the success factors behind that which went well. By doing this, you are going to understand the 'mechanics' under the surface of exercises and interaction patterns.

4. Don't be sad or disappointed when a well-prepared meeting or exercise flops, and all your good intentions went down the drain. Becoming an excellent professional is a process of experimenting and learning. And part of the deal is that things might go wrong! Don't blame yourself, don't blame the group. Learn from it! And if you can't determine what went wrong or why things happened in that way, just experiment once more in a other group (when you think it fits there) and see what happens.

5. Keep a journal on the sessions you did, with the sessions plans, what did you do, what did you learn, points of attention for the next time etc. Writing it down is a way of learning in its own! And writing it down gives space in your head. Our memories are very bad!

6. Develop your own set of indicators of monitoring sessions: what do you see, feel, hear, smell or sense that (figuratively) raises the green, orange or red flag? By doing so, and explaining these things to your partner, you give expression to all those important signals that inform you, mostly in your belly, when you are working with the group.

7. One of the 'red flags' in the preparation of a session must be: 'The last time we did this, it worked well or they liked it'. In a new context, never do things that previously worked out well without determining why that happened in the first place. Each session, each group in each phase of the process has a different context, so for each activity you have to reason anew why you think it would be appropriate right now.

8. Support each other's learning by dividing roles and tasks in such a way that you balance between the roles and tasks that you are already good at and the roles and tasks in which you want to develop yourself.

9. Sometimes it is good to create the conditions for learning in the group as well. Tell them you want to try something new, something you have never done before. That gives you the opportunity to ask them feedback as well. You can tell them before you start that it is an experiment, or do so afterwards. And on many occasions you just do, without telling your group anything.

10. Ask each other, and give each other feedback, and be precise in doing so. You can only learn from real and sincere feedback, not from 'honey round the mouth' sentences that cover up the situation.

Annex I | A set of ice-breakers and energizers

Energisers and ice-breakers have the same goal: to enhance energy in the group through which people loosen up and start to feel at ease. The difference between the energisers and ice-breakers is in the moment of the implementation of the activity: at the beginning of a group session, as an energising intermezzo or as an introduction to a (serious) exercise.

Since part of the idea behind the group is actually to provide a fun atmosphere, you can actually say: 'We also want to laugh here; who of you can tell us a funny story?'

Some questions can help to create a positive atmosphere. This can be used especially if you see that all the attention goes to a difficult problem that cannot be solved. You could say: 'This is such a difficult problem. Let's give ourselves a break and think of. for example:
- How do you provide an atmosphere of pleasure in your family?
- What do you do when you feel really tired or depressed?
- What is the funniest thing one of your children ever asked you?'

There are typical moments in the flow of a group when the energy is low. To boost the energy, you can use a short energiser.

I.1 Getting to know each other

Fadia Mardawi

Activity name	Getting to know each other
Time duration	30 minutes
Tools needed	None
Objective	Strengthen the relationship among the participants and break the ice
Group instructions	Split the participants into groups of pairs Each pair to sit face to face and talk about themselves
Important instruction for the facilitator	After the pair conversation ends, all the participants come back into one big group, to their original seats, and each participant will talk now about her pair colleague

Activity name	Getting to know each other
Participants' evaluation and feedback	More time for this activity to get to know each other; although all the participants are from the same town, they never met and didn't have the chance to know each other before
Other notes	Not to exceed the required time

Activity name	Set rules for the group before the session
Time duration	15 minutes
Tools needed	Blank sheets of paper and pens
Objective	Create a friendly atmosphere and control the group
Group instructions	To write the rules on a hanging whiteboard in a simple way
Important instruction for the facilitator	Engage the participant in setting the rules
Participants' evaluation and feedback	Abide by the agreed rules
Other notes	The rules are to be suitable for them

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Set rules for the group before the session

Activity name	Introducing the participants
Time duration	30 minutes
Tools needed	Ball
Objective	Engage all the participants and have each participant introduce herself to the others
Group instructions	Each woman introduces herself by mentioning her name, marital status and her wishes, then throws the ball to another participant to do the same introduction

30

Introducing the participants

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Activity name	Introducing the participants
Important instruction for the facilitator	To give sufficient time to each participant to introduce herself
Participants' evaluation and feedback	Listened well to each participant and got to know each other
Other notes	Keep confidentiality among the group members
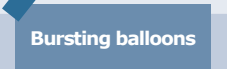
Activity name	Social visit to one of the mothers
Time duration	1 hour
Required tools	Gift
Activity objective	Building good rapport and friendship among the mothers
Group instruction	Determine the date and time, determine each person's share of the cost of a gift and determine the point of assembly
Facilitator instruction	Confirm with the group the date and time for the visit, confirm the visit duration and assign one person to buy the gift
Participants' evaluation and feedback	Nice, entertaining and fruitful activity
Other notes	The activity strengthens the relationship among the group members and makes it easy for those who were not able to attend the session to come and meet with the others

1h

Social visit to one of the mothers

Maha Hawari

Activity name	Acquaintance
Time duration	15 minutes
Required tools	Ball
Activity objective	For the participants to get acquainted with each other, discover from where they came and the reason why they are here
Group instruction	Sitting around comfortably and talking freely
Facilitator instruction	To stand in a suitable place and give mothers the chance to talk
Participants' evaluation and feedback	They had the chance to talk freely and comfortably to each other
Other notes	The acquaintance can be made also by mentioning the name, marital status and the favourite meal

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Acquintence

I.2 Body work

Activity name	Bursting balloons
Time duration	Open, until all the balloons burst
Tools needed	String and balloons
Objective	Engage all the participants and have them all participating
Group instructions	Each woman to have a balloon tied to her leg and move in the room
Important instruction for the facilitator	The game rule is for each participant to avoid getting her balloon burst by other participants

?

Bursting balloons

Activity name	Bursting balloons
Participants' evaluation and feedback	Pleasant and comfortable feelings, because it was an energising activity for them
Other notes	Reward the winner with a gift at the end of the game

I.3 Interaction and curiosity

Activity name	Queen of actions
Time duration	20 minutes
Tools needed	None
Objective	Engage all the participants by energising exercises that require focusing and interaction
Group instructions	Choose one participant to leave the room; another one from the rest of the group is to be the 'queen of actions', who will lead the group to do certain moves and others are to follow. Then the outside participant comes back into the room and tries to recognise who is the leader in the group. After she has recognised the leader, another person is to be chosen to leave the room; this pattern is repeated
Important instruction for the facilitator	The necessity to focus by eyes to recognise who is the queen
Participants' evaluation and feedback	They enjoyed the game so much
Other notes	It is very important to take into account the individual differences between the participants

Queen of actions

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I.4 Fun

Wisam Khatatbeh

Chairs game
20

Activity name	Chairs game
Time duration	20 minutes
Required tools	Chairs
Activity objective	Energising
Group instruction	The participants should move around the chairs and, by a particular sign from the facilitator, they each find themselves a chair to sit on. The number of the chairs is less than the number of the players, so one player will not be able to find a chair – this means that she will lose and leave the room
Facilitator instruction	Explain the game rules and stages and keep the order
Participants' evaluation and feedback	It was nice, very energising
Other notes	Give full attention to the game and reward the winner

Fruits game
30

Activity name	Fruits game
Time duration	30 minutes
Required tools	Chairs
Activity objective	Energising
Group instruction	All the participants are to sit on the chairs. The facilitator should divide them into groups by giving each group a different fruit name, for example, the apple group. Then the facilitator asks women from each group to exchange chairs with the other group; one chair is to be taken out, leaving one player without a chair. This is continued until the all players in the group lose, except one player sitting on the last chair
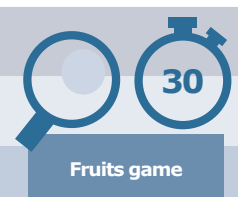
Activity name	Fruits game
Facilitator instruction	Should find a sufficient number of players and chairs; explain to the players the rules and stages of the game.
Participants' evaluation and feedback	Joyful and energising
Other notes	Keep the order

Maha Hawari

Activity name	Ice-breaking	
Time duration	20 minutes	20
Required tools	None	Ice-breaking
Activity objective	To get rid of any fear or shy feelings by laughing out loud and continuous movement	
Group instruction	The participants are to stand in a circle, and the facilitator at the front is then to count from 1 to 7. At the count of 7, the mothers put their hands on their head and say '7 up'. Those who don't, lose and cannot continue	
Facilitator instruction	Explain the exercise clearly and engage all the participants	
Participants' evaluation and feedback	Expressed joy and happiness	

I.5 Relationship building

Activity name	Roll of paper game
Time duration	1 hour
Required tools	Roll of paper
Activity objective	Motivating and energising, plus to get acquainted and to know each other better.
Group instruction	Each participant is to start talking about herself, meanwhile tearing the roll of paper into small pieces by hand; she should continue talking until she finishes tearing up the piece of paper
Facilitator instruction	Explain the game fundamentals to the participants
Participants' evaluation and feedback	Nice and energising activity, created a funny atmosphere and kind of curiosity for using the roll of paper
Other notes	Keep the order
Participants' evaluation and feedback	Enjoyed the writing and listening to each other

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Activity name	**Freestyle writing**
Time duration	15 minutes
Required tools	Colourful balloons, papers and pens
Activity objective	To talk briefly about themselves
Group instruction	Write about one beautiful event, one casual event and one bad event, then to put a balloon according to each event
Facilitator instruction	Explain the meaning out of each event

Annex II | Working methods

In this annex, community workers share their working methods and experiences in designing and implementing the groups that they are facilitating. Their contributions address working methods to identify a topic by the MFA group, working methods to focus on relationships within the MFA group and explaining within a group exactly the time frame and schedule of a meeting in which you as a facilitator have to say goodbye.

II.1 Working methods on identifying a topic

Jihan Alshouli

Important points:
- Must think of the session's methods;
- Must choose the sessions date and place;
- Must identify the required tools for the session;
- Must use the open-ended discussions method as it's a training method using a brainstorming technique by the group to identify a topic for discussion using their language and expressions.

The games and the activities are one of the main methods to determine the topics, and they do not require many resources or much creativity. The following should be taken into consideration:
- Assign the instructions for the activity;
- Estimate the time duration;
- Direct implementation;
- Take notes during the activity;
- Clarify the game rules;
- Clarify the game goal and objective;
- Explain the game stages;
- Role distribution.

Here you should emphasise that the game is not for real, yet it helps us to focus and to find the link with the real facts. Also, it has good features such as to help easily deliver and recall information and not being boring – it is an entertaining activity for everybody.

Let's start with the acquaintance activity that will help us identify a topic, such as the "fish-bowl" activity: this consists of two groups, one who are 'insiders', discussing and expressing themselves, and the other are 'outsiders', hearing the insider group and listening to their conversations. The groups then swap around, eventually forming one big group to summarise the discussion and to choose the most common subject that the women were talking about and vote, on a majority basis, to be the topic for this session.

The next activity is...

The Spider game, in which the ladies sit or stand in a circle. Give one of them a ball of wool; then she starts to wrap the wool yarn around her hand while talking about herself and whatever else is on her mind. Then she passes the ball of wool to another lady sitting beside her, who is then the second one to introduce herself. This continues until the whole group has participated. Meanwhile, the facilitator should take notes to choose at the end the most wanted topic to talk about and discuss.

II.2 Working methods on relationship focus

Raja Alaza'ar

Activity Name	Group breakfast
Time duration	2 hours
Required tools	Determine the date and the place, invite the mothers and provide transportation
Activity objective	Building strong relationship among the group members
Group instruction	Recommend a suitable place, explain the activity objective and emphasise team work
Facilitator instruction	Plan logistically beforehand for the activity
Participants' evaluation and feedback	It was an (unloaded) activity for the mothers to enable them to let go; They talked about different personal subjects aside from problems regarding their family and children; They were glad to go out and were happy for a change in routine; They had some time for themselves
Other notes	Such activities are needed for a change in routine and to build good rapport among the group members

Activity Name	Visit a mother with newborn baby
Time duration	2 hours
Required tools	Buy a small gift, determine the time for the visit and provide transportation
Activity objective	Building a strong relationship among the group members and sharing their joyful and sorrowful moments
Group instruction	Committed to be on time for the visit, keep quiet during the visit and support the mother emotionally
Facilitator instruction	Get the mother's address and arrange with her the suitable time for the visit; offer her psychological and moral support
Participants' evaluation and feedback	They enjoyed the visit so much. They decided to do it again soon and exchange invitations and visits to each other
Other notes	Such activities are needed for a change in routine and to build good rapport among the group members

II.3 Saying goodbye

Nahreez Aoufi
The last preparation session for the mothers' group (MFA)

At the beginning of the session, the rehabilitation worker welcomes the group and reviews with them the objectives of the previous sessions and to which extent the participants had agreed on the outcomes. Also covered are their feedback on the entertaining activities, the good rapport that has been built up in the course of the periodic sessions, the new life and leadership skills that they gained and finally emphasis on the ability of the participants now to continue forward as a group without the need for rehabilitation worker or facilitator. The final role for the facilitator is to ask the group to nominate one participant who they think has the ability, the skills and the interest to be the leader for the group and to encourage the other participants to vote for her and to start work in harmony with her to prepare for the upcoming sessions.

The facilitator willingly offers her continuous support to the chosen group leader and wishes the group all the success in the future.

Annex III | Schedules of meetings

In this annex, community workers share examples of their schedules of meetings with MFA groups. Their contributions address advice on how to design an MFA meeting, an overview of the time frame and schedule of the first meeting of the MFA group and an overview of a meeting in the performing phase of the MFA.

III.1 Design of an MFA meeting
Ameeneh Jabali

How do I plan for MFA session?
- I choose a suitable place.
- I choose a suitable time.
- Confirm the attendance with the participants two days before the session.
- Plan for the pre-agreed topics from the previous session. This includes: the introductory (acquaintance) activity, explain the objectives, topics discussion, ice-breaking activity, evaluation and determine the date for the following session.
- To not overlook implementing funny and friendly activities.
- Distributing the roles between the two facilitators in a smooth and simple way.
- Use the MFA technique.
- To prepare beforehand useful tools such as flip chart, drawings and woollen thread to be used for the activities.
- Final evaluation by the closure of the session.

Example of the methods used in one session:
- Ice-breaking activity, which introduces the participants to each other and encourages them to talk about their interests and hobbies
- Discussing the session topic (which was about the women's rights as agreed on in the previous session), with the facilitators drawing a tree on the flip chart
- The facilitators start the discussion by asking what are the women's rights? Are these rights applied? Then they hand the participants blank cards to write their answers on and asked them kindly to stick their cards on the branches of the tree drawn on the flip-chart, either at the top, middle or the bottom of the tree, according on the priority that they attach to them. This is to be done with the support and cooperation of the facilitators.
- At the end of the session, each participant would tie part of the woollen thread around her hand while speaking out her evaluation, then pass the rest of the wool to another participant and so on until a sort of network is formed among them all.
- The session is wrapped up by thanking the participants for their attendance and suggesting a date for the following session.

III.2 Time frame and schedule of the first meeting
Rudaina Abu Jarad

I would like to tell Amal about the work mechanism and the time frame of the first session of the MFA group, by creating a simple table to let Amal understand the activities in detail and the required tools for them, with some notes.

Note: it's very important to have two facilitators in the session.

Time	Content	Required tools	Notes
10:00–10:10 **10**	Introductory – acquaintance activity: Ask every two participants to sit facing each other and have each one introduce herself and talk about herself to her colleague and vice versa. Then have the whole group sit together and each participant to talk about her colleague, not herself	None	At the beginning, some of the participants objected to participate, as they already knew each other; however, after the activity, the facilitator asked them if they liked the activity, and they positively agreed that it added to their information and they became more acquainted with each other
10:10–10:30 **20**	Ice-breaking activity: Explain to the participants the objective of the game – to have each participant tie a balloon to her leg and move in the room to try to burst the other participants' balloons and keep her own balloon inflated	Balloons and string	You will notice Amal that not all the women would like to participate in this activity, but you need to encourage them as it's very entertaining and is a 'let-go' activity

Time	Content	Required tools	Notes
10:30–11:10 **40**	Explain the session objectives: The two facilitators must engage the mothers in putting the plan and the activities of the session into action and feeling the responsibility of participating in the session for their own benefit, learning from each other's experiences to help them work on solving their problems	Blank sheets of paper, pens, flip chart and its papers	Considering the importance of engaging everyone in putting the objectives into action, listening to each other and taking notes. Also, the facilitators should sit facing each other to better communicate
11:10–11:30 **20**	Session evaluation and recommendations: Emphasise the importance of commitment in attending the sessions on time. Maintain the confidentiality of the topics among the group members. Ask the participants to confirm their attendance at the following session on the exact date and in the agreed place, which should be suitable even for women with special needs The evaluation: We draw one smiley face and another frowning face on the board and ask each participant to place a tick under the face that expresses their evaluation of that day's session	Blank sheets of paper and flip chart Flip chart papers and colouring pencils	Invest in the evaluation work

III.3 A meeting in the performing phase of the MFA
Manal Rawajbeh

In one of the sessions for my group, one mother talked about her son's problem in integrating to kindergarten: he was five years old and suffering from a motion problem that meant that he could not stand or walk. All the mothers agreed on the positive aspects and importance of having him integrated into kindergarten to learn new skills, communicate with other children, build a good rapport with others and participate in entertaining activities. These are in addition to his original legitimate right for free compulsory education starting in the kindergarten as a preface to introducing him later to going to school.

At this stage, the mother showed some concerns related to her son going to the kindergarten, as he cannot walk on his own; further, he is temperamental and is used to throwing tantrums, screaming and shouting if he needed something but couldn't get it. Hence, she was suggesting to have specialised hired assistance for the teacher in the class to take care of such cases like her son. Especially, such examples of disabled children could add to the burden of the teacher in the class because of her lack of knowledge in how to deal with them; thus, this might lead to the child being left without adequate care.

The mothers in the group found the suggestion very sensible and agreed to talk with the management of the kindergarten about it; thus they should prepare for a session to discuss the matter in more detail. The date was set for that session and the preparation started as follows:

- Confirm with the mothers their attendance on the specified date and place;
- Invite the manager of the kindergarten to participate in the group discussion.

The session activities were prepared as follows:

Time	Content	Required tools	Notes
10:00–10:15	Introductory (acquaintance) activity	–	Each lady to mention her name and the name of the lady besides her
10:15–11:15	Ice-breaking activity: Distribute to each participant a sheet of paper with a tree drawn on it. At the bottom of the tree is written 'my worries', and on the trunk of tree is written 'my characteristics'. On the right side is written 'my interests', on the left side is 'my ambitions' and at the top of the tree is 'my dreams'. Ask each participant to write on these topics, so as to get acquainted to each other	A tree drawn on a sheet of paper, with 'my worries' written at the bottom of the tree, 'my characteristics' on the trunk, 'my interests' on the right side, 'my ambitions' on the left side and 'my dreams' at the top of the tree	Give this paper to each and every participant
11:15–11:45	"Fish-bowl" activity	Divide the participants into two groups, one group for mothers having disabled children at the preliminary school and others having disabled children not in the preliminary school	The first group sits in a circle as an inside circle; the other group sits as an outside circle. The 'insider' group is asked to discuss a question, while the 'outsider' group just listens. The question was: 'What is the best solution, in your own opinion, to solve the problem of integrating disabled children to school?'. The groups then switch roles, with the 'outsiders' being asked 'What is the best solution, in your opinion, proposed by the first group?' At the end, all participants come back into one group to discuss the best solutions

Time	Content	Required tools	Notes
11:45–12:00 **15**	Balloons activity	Balloons and string	Each participant ties a balloon to her leg and moves around while trying to burst the others' balloons. She has to keep her own balloon inflated, and the winner is the one who at the end still has an inflated balloon
12:00–12:30 **30**	The network activity (evaluation)	Ball of wool	We ask the question: 'What do you think of today's session?' Give one of the participants a ball of wool; then she starts to wrap wool yarn around her hand while talking, giving her opinion on the sessions. When she has finished, she passes the ball of wool to the lady sitting beside her, who then gives her opinion while winding the thread around her hand. This procedure continues until the whole group has participated: at the end, a network is formed by the woollen threads

By the end of the session, the mother was convinced, in principle, to take her son to the kindergarten to become prepared for school at a later phase; she would then inform the group about her son's progress after he starts going to the kindergarten.

Annex IV | Example of a flyer with invitation

Important Announcement from CBR

Start of a Multi-Family Group

The Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Programme announces the formation of a group of mothers having disabled children, and other interested mothers, to take place at Tamoun Municipality. In a Multi-Family Group you can share experiences and ideas and find solutions and inspiration.
The first meeting will take place on Monday the 3rd of November 2014, 10 o'clock in the morning.
For registration, please contact the rehabilitation worker at the Municipality.
For inquiries, please call this phone number: 0591234567

Let's work together for prettier reality for our women!

Iman Daraghmeh

معاً و سوياً
لندعم بعضنا البعض

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Annex V | Checklist for local context

In this annex, a community worker shares examples on how CBR workers are working with values and norms in MFA groups.

Fadia Bassam

How should one deal with these principles and values in the context of social customs and traditions?

- Choose a suitable place for the sessions of the MFA group, preferably a public place or one belonging to the municipality or at a women's association; access to the place should also be exclusive for women, with no men allowed to join, so the women would not be exposed to any town gossip.
- Choose topics that do not conflict with the customs and traditions of our town or community in which we live.
- Choose as group members women with a good reputation and who are socially accepted; otherwise, if any socially unaccepted woman join the group, this would affect the whole group and its continuity.
- Choose an appropriate time for the session; this should be during the day, not in the evening.
- Avoid any sensitive subject that could be related to any particular woman or family in the town.
- Retain full confidentiality and privacy for each contribution from any participant, so as not to exposed anyone to any criticism by the outside community.
- Keep the participants' mobile and telephone numbers among the group and never disclose them with anyone outside the group.
- Have as few sessions as possible, twice a month for example, so the participants will not be exposed to any criticism by their husbands or parents for going out a lot outside the house; further, discuss the appointments with the participants to maintain their attendance and continuity.

Do you have any suggestions for Amal since she is new to the field?

- To be successful in her job, she should take the social customs and tradition of our community into account.
- She should take into consideration the individual differences among the group members, so as to not hurt anyone's feelings.
- The conversation should be in a low tone of voice using the same accent and expressions of the attendees.
- She should dress decently and in an appropriate way along with the community customs.
- She must be well prepared for the session beforehand.
- She must arrive before the participants to prepare logistically for the session.

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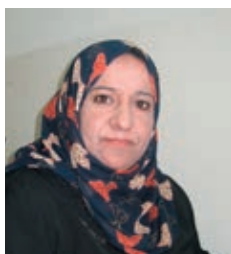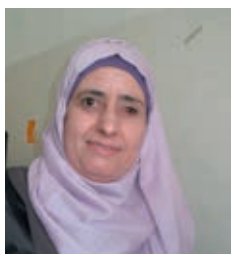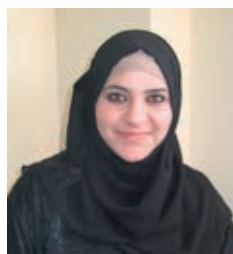
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Ameenah Jabali

Fadia Mardawi

Fathiya Abu Mazin
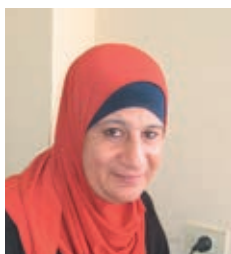
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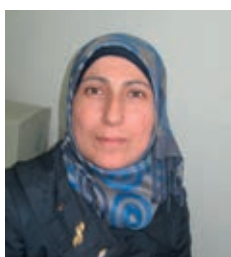
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Jihan Alshouli

Maha Huwwari

Manal Rawajbeh

Nabeela Ahmed

Nahreez Aoufi

Ola Abu Salah

Raja' Alaza'ar

Rudaina Abu Jarad

Wisam Khatatbeh

Yoke van der Meulen

Suzan M. Al Mitwalli

Shiraz H. Nasr

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