Trainers working with the Multi-Family Approach

Part B
MANUAL FOR TRAINERS

WARTRAUMA FOUNDATION

Colophon

Collaboration: War Trauma Foundation, Foundation Centrum ’45, Foundation Arq and Sioo Interuniversitair Centrum voor Organisatie- en Veranderkunde, the Netherlands; Institute of Community and Public Health (ICPH) - Birzeit University and Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR), Northern West Bank, Palestine, which is administered by Palestinian Medical Relief Society, Patients Friends Society and Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS).

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War Trauma Foundation
Nienoord 5
1112 XE Diemen
The Netherlands
T +31(0)20 6 438 538
F +31(0)20 6 474 580
E info@wartrauma.nl and intervention@wartrauma.nl
I www.wartrauma.nl and www.interventionjournal.com

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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

This manual for trainers in the Multi-Family Approach (MFA) is the second part of a three-part manual on Working with the Multi-Family Approach in (post) conflict and humanitarian settings. Trainers need to be familiar with the contents of part A (Organisations working with MFA) and are referred to part C (Manual for facilitators) for detailed information on MFA skills and techniques.

Contrary to Western settings where the MFA has been successfully applied by professional group therapists, in the chronic stressful circumstances of (post) conflict and humanitarian settings, neither are there enough specially educated professionals available to provide psychological support nor do people affected by these circumstances particularly wish to see themselves as 'in need of therapy'.

This manual has been specifically designed for organisations wishing to work in the facilitation of psychosocial support groups with humanitarian fieldworkers who have not been specifically trained as clinical psychologists or therapists. However, they will have some experience with working with families or groups.

The manual has been developed by the War Trauma Foundation in close cooperation with the Institute of Community and Public Health (ICPH) and the community-based rehabilitation (CBR) programme. It is based on evidence-informed practice over years in clinical and preventive work. Our clinical work has been informed by the team at the Anna Freud Centre (formerly developed at the Marlborough Family Service) in London and Foundation Centrum ’45 in the Netherlands. We hope that the manual will help to extend knowledge and expertise and will be useful to you and your organisation in helping children, parents and families.

1

How to work with this manual

1.1 Aim of the manual

The aim of this manual is to facilitate trainers in MFA. The manual contains contents and structure of subjects that are meaningful for the MFA. We hope it is helpful, at least to not have to continually 'reinvent the wheel'. It has a place in the sequence of training and learning activities: after first training groups were piloted, based on the experiences gained, a following training was organised. All trainings were interactive.

The manual has been written with future trainers of MFA in mind. The manual has been based on our experiences in particular in the West Bank, Palestine – however, experiences with the method elsewhere have clearly influenced the text as well.

1.2 How to use this manual?

The manual describes a training that has a principle: learning by doing. In fact, that applies to the groups in the MFA as well. What is being discussed or experienced inside the groups and during the sessions is expected to reflect and impact daily-life situations and interactions. The manual and training therefore are supposed to facilitate, not to direct. Adaptations to the order of modules for instance or time spent on particular topics may be needed.

The manual has been structured as follows: after introduction chapters describing the MFA in general, setting up and organising groups and learning processes, the training modules are described in more detail and an example of a possible schedule of a training is incorporated.

For the time being, this must be enough for you as a future trainer to help you to design and carry out your training. If you are not a skilled MFA therapist or MFA practitioner, part of the implementation of the MFA in your organisation or region will be a 'train the trainer' programme carried out by an MFA professional. In cooperation with and supported by him or her, you can design the specific training your organisation/region needs. See, for the organisational embedding of the MFA, part A of this manual.

We hope you will feel encouraged to employ the MFA.

2

The cornerstones of the MFA training

In this chapter, we emphasise the cornerstone of the MFA training.

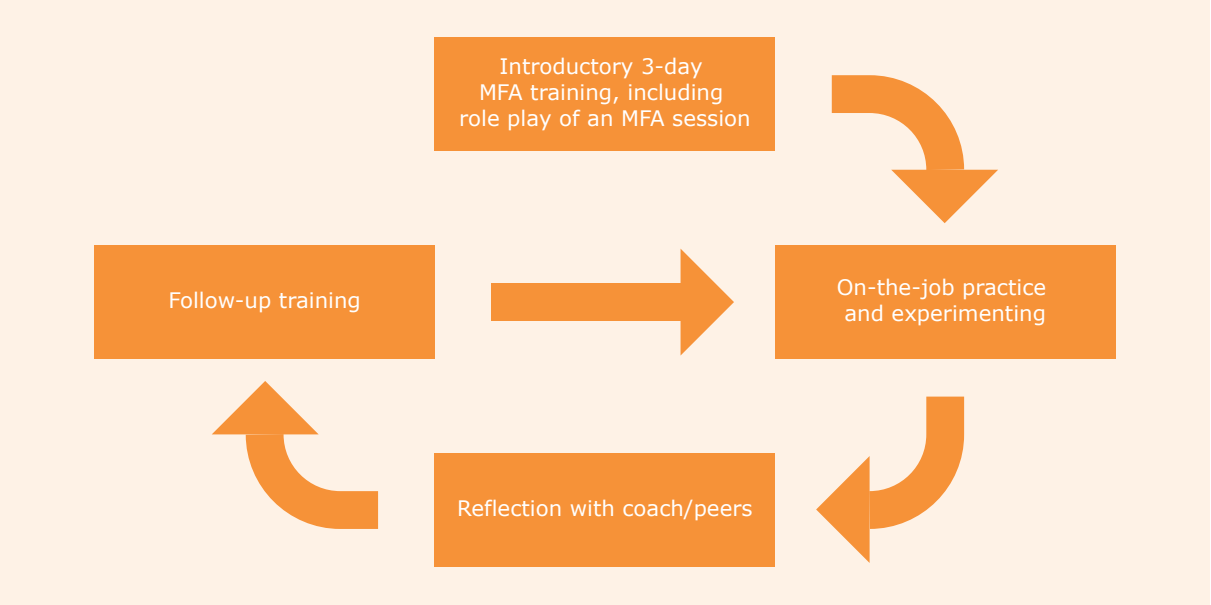
2.1 The core of the training and some extras

In general, the participants will have experience, knowledge and skills in working with groups and families. Nevertheless, it can be useful to refresh those knowledge and skills. Therefore it could be necessary to develop and carry out a basis 'refreshment course' that can be incorporated in the training. That decision is yours, based on the baseline study of your target group. This kind of material is not provided in this manual. When your target group is a group of well-educated social-psychology professionals, it may not be necessary. On the other hand, when your target group is a group of experienced fieldworkers, it can be very useful to start with some common understanding of their practice so far by introducing a couple of models and concepts that might help in the professional conversation about their practice before you dive into the more complex matter of the MFA, the heart of the training.

2.2 Action learning: the essential cornerstone

It is certainly possible and needed to practice and experiment with the MFA skills and techniques during the training days, but it is even more important to connect working and learning in class with working and learning in the field. Action learning in the participants' own practice is part of the training cycle. The training is spread out over time and starts

with a couple of training days. The participants then have several weeks to bring into practice what they have learned, experiment with the new techniques and reflect. In this period, it is important that a trainer or coach attends a session and supports the process of reflection. This period of on-the-job practice and training is then consolidated with a follow-up training and another cycle of on-the-job practice. See the chapter on design of a training (chapter 4 and 6).



2.3 Field visits

For professionals doing their work in a field where circumstances are difficult and they never meet the theoretical requirements, it is very important that they are able to learn in the field of their personal actions. It is important they become reflective practitioners. Trainers or coaches attending MFA sessions in the field may prefer not to interfere in the session but make mental (or written) notes. These notes may relate to: the structure of the session; what went well and what did not go so well; the way facilitators worked together; the MFA techniques that were used or not used; issues raised by the participants and how the facilitators did or did not react; issues related to body language of the facilitators and/or the participants; whether or not the facilitators and the participants felt comfortable; plans for upcoming sessions; and, last but not least, how the facilitators can be supported more. Following the session, the coach or trainer sits in a quiet place with the facilitator(s) and invites the facilitators to reflect together to develop professional excellence.

3 Being the trainer

You may be a highly accomplished and very experienced professional who has been professionally trained in working with groups and families. And now you will be the trainer in the MFA. A lot of your competencies are needed to design and carry out the training you will provide.

3.1 Learning by doing: being a model

In learning situations, congruency is very important. The trainer is a role model and the sessions are showcases of the MFA. This is certainly important in those parts of the training where it is about practicing skills. On the other hand, it is very important that the participants grab the theory and concept of the MFA in a precise way. At those moments in the modules, where in a way you as a trainer are giving small lectures, it is possible to address the change of position and scene. An MFA facilitator would never usually simply turn on the projector and then project some slides and give a lecture. However, this is a training on the MFA, so sometimes you have to do this. In all the other parts, it is important that you act as an MFA facilitator to be the role model. As a role model, you perform in such a way that you 'live' the core task of a trainer and future facilitator of MFA groups. These core tasks are as follows.

1. Create a safe and supportive atmosphere

Then it starts. There is a new group of participants, who probably do not even know each other; no matter how experienced they are and how calm they look, there is also uncertainty.

As a trainer, you are facilitating this group, but right now you are the leader: they are looking at you! Each phase in the development of this learning group asks something else of you to do to ensure a safe climate for learning in which the group can grow and stay in place.

2. Create ground rules for learning

It is important to create the ground rules for learning in a process of co-creation. See module 1 (in chapter 7) for some ideas for doing this. The most important thing to remember is that it is very difficult to set the right rules with a new group. There will be some basic rules for the group to agree on though. Otherwise: let the rules evolve over time by discussing them and reframing them based on the outcome of the discussion. This kind of discussion is not just a discussion over rules; it is a dialogue about the way the group is doing, named the task 1 and 2 dialogue. See the box below.

The Task 1 and 2 dialogue:
The assumption here is as follows: each group of learners is a group with a task. In this case, the task is 'becoming skilled MFA practitioners'. The participants need each other so as to achieve their own personal learning objectives in this. And each dialogue, lecture, role play, exercise or assignment is a task on its own to achieve the overall objective.

The activity at hand, whatever it may be (e.g. a role play or a reflection exercise) is in this theory task 1: the task at hand.

Whenever you as a facilitator or one of the participants think it is appropriate, you can take a time-out for a task 2 conversation. A conversation on how all of you are working on task 1.

- How is everyone feeling?
- Are we doing the good things?
- Are we doing them in a good way?
- What do we learn about how we want to learn and work together of this conversation?
- What does the conclusion of this conversation mean for the ground rules?

The task 2 is a kind of conversation on meta-level. After finishing it, you return to the probably redefined way of working on task 1, or a new task 1. It is a way of working to empower everyone in the group to take control over the way of working, the process and the dynamics of the group.

It is not necessary to repeat it after every single 'task 1'. It is useful when you or one of the participants make observations about feelings and emotions that you or they want to check.

A task 1 conversation is not only a method to prevent or rebalance flaws in the group; it is also very useful to have a task 2 conversation when everything goes very well, and that's something to learn from as well: how can we maintain this good atmosphere, this flow, this smooth and productive cooperation?

3. Provide the opportunity to learn

Being a trainer is different to being a teacher. In our terminology, a trainer facilitates learning. You are holding the learning environment and creating a space for learning. As a trainer supporting your peers, you have:

- Extensive knowledge, skills and experience in working with groups and families as a fieldworker;
- Sufficient experience, knowledge and skills in working with the MFA in conflict-affected areas or humanitarian settings;
- Experience as a trainer of adults, peers and professionals.

The practitioner in the field, being also a trainer, has a position of being the more experienced peer, who wants to share but who is equally able to learn from his or her trainees. This creates a mutual relationship. Yes, in some way you have more experience, but you also acknowledge that you can learn by the questions, insights and experiences of those you are training. You are travelling together. You may not have that much more experience in actually applying the MFA method yet. In a way, you may be managing dual roles: increasing your own experience and skills in MFA, while at the same time training your peers.

In this manual, you will also find annex I, giving some challenges that you sometimes have to face.

As a trainer–facilitator, you must keep in mind that your role is to moderate and guide communication within a group of aspirant MFA facilitators, who may be at different levels of understanding what MFA facilitating really implies and how they will work with their MFA groups. You will design your training based on your own learning, your own practice, the way you were trained yourself and the guidelines presented in this manual.

Ola Abu Salah

The preparation was done for the MFA group (group of multiple families); at the beginning, the objectives were proposed and listed as: offering psychosocial support to the group members, exchanging experiences and expertise, and mothers supporting each other.

An ice-breaking activity was implemented by the group, where each mother had to write on a piece of paper her name, address, her wishes and ambitions, then to fold it and put it inside a balloon; afterwards, all the balloons were burst and the small pieces of paper were read out loud to the group so as to get to know each other.

Afterwards, the fish-bowl activity was implemented: this involved having two groups sitting in a circle, one

in an inner and the other in an outer circle. The 'insiders' discuss a proposed topic, while the 'outsiders' listen to them. Later the groups swap around, with the insider group having to listen while the outsider group discusses the topic. At the end, all the participants come back into one big group.

At the end of the session, the discussion was summarised through implementing the Spider activity. Here, one of the participants was given a ball of wool and was asked to start wrapping the wool around her hand while talking, to evaluate and summarise the session; once she was done, she passed the rest of the wool to another participant, and the procedure was carried out again. At the end, a sort of 'spider network' was formed.

The training was good for the team and was very well supported by the team from Birzeit University. New skills were gained and practiced in the field with the MFA group.

There were still some difficulties in implementing the training, such as the standing in front of the group and the management, but this is easy to overcome by practicing also with suitable preparation before the training in the field.

It was very challenging for me to start using the MFA technique, as I used to impose information on the group and would talk more than listen to them in the past, but now I am only facilitating the session, listening more than talking and adopting the non-cognitive technique, which is for me a very new way of working.

4

Organising the training

In this chapter, we go over a number of important issues needed to be done before you can start your sessions.

4.1 Expectations management

Participants for the training start the training from the moment they are asked to join, or they enrol themselves. The management of expectations is very important. How can you do this?

- In a small brochure, you can give an overview about the training, including for whom it is, what the criteria for participation are, what the participants can expect in dates, duration, content, way of working, how they can prepare, etc.
- You can do almost the same in an invitation letter that you send to them about 3 weeks in advance with a special section about what they can expect on the first meeting.

4.2 Organising practicalities

Before getting started with a planned training, arrangements have to be taken care of. Time and place, participants and aims of the training at hand need to be communicated. Practicalities such as working hours, material to be used (e.g. PowerPoint sheets), reimbursement of travel costs etc. will need to have been taken care of. These are considerations with respect to the training itself, but they apply also to groups that the

participants will organise in the future. Communication with local authorities, support structures and organisation of teamwork (planning meetings, intercollegial consultation) need to be emphasised in the training.

Time schedules and coffee breaks

Part of organising the training involves setting up time schedules that best fit the possibilities of the participants. In the West Bank, the participants had to rise and travel very early in the morning to get to Nablus, the most central location and therefore suitable as setting. It meant, however, that at 11 am it was time for breakfast. Working hours were between 9 am and 2 pm. The food was provided for by the team.

Equipment

There is a need to check whether technical facilities such as, for example, laptop, projector and flip charts are available. Do you need tables or just chairs?

Food

A special word on the availability of food and beverages: these are very important social binding instruments. Restrict these, however, to the breaks and be clear about having a working atmosphere between breaks. When groups share difficulties with food as a central theme, it is very therapeutic to work around food.

Room set-up

It may require some effort, but it is important to find the right place for a learning event. Here is a list of preferences:

- The ratio of space to participants. It is nice when the learners literally have more than enough space to move, breathe and learn. A rule of thumb: 4 to 5 m2 per person. The possibilities for break-out spaces for small group work nearby is nice;
- Daylight and fresh air. The ultimate space for learning has daylight and an access to some garden, courtyard etc. (in very hot climates, noiseless air-conditioning is preferable to some space outside);
- Equipment such as a projector, flip charts etc. are available as well as other material such as paper and crayons are exposed on a table;
- It should be possible to stick flip charts, posters etc. on the walls;
- Chairs are comfortable and arranged in a circle or semicircle, tables are available and quick changes in the layout of the room can be made easily;
- As a personal touch, some facilitators/trainers like to bring such things as flowers or music to their meetings.

Especially the first time you and the participants meet, it is important that the room is set up in such a way that the participants feel welcome.

5

Working with professionals

It is very important to know your target group well. Perhaps they are your colleagues right now; however, preparing for a training, it is useful to see them with 'fresh eyes'.

5.1 Know your target group

As a trainer, you will need to make sure that you understand to a certain extent the political, social and cultural context of the people who you will train. This is of course always the case! You will also need to understand the broader strategic aims of your organisation that wishes to implement the MFA and the beneficiaries that the organisation generally works with. In other words, you will have to be aware of the context you are working in, even if it is your own organisation. Becoming a trainer gives you a new responsibility for the implementation of the organisation strategy.

Also, with regard to the background of the (future) facilitators, you will need to get acquainted with their knowledge and expertise background, the ways that they are most used to for optimal learning and the questions that they have.

Besides the individual learning processes, it is relevant to have a good idea of the local structures that your participants are part of. What positions do they have in and outside of their teams? What do they consider their core responsibility within their team?

5.2 How professionals learn

The aspirant MFA facilitators work in the field with the families and are professionals with a lot of experience and certain learning habits. That means:

- They will be motivated to invest their time and energy in learning a new approach only if they are convinced that this new approach will serve the interest of their beneficiaries and/or their organisation;
- They will learn only what they feel they need to learn. In other words, they are practical;
- They learn most of all by doing. Role play and experimenting with new techniques is more effective than lecture-style training;
- The training will be especially interesting to them if exercises and theoretical explanation are related to their specific context;
- Adult learners enjoy problem-based learning. The problems presented in the training must be realistic to the trainees and appropriate for their context;
- Their learning is affected and enriched by the experience that each one brings into the process;
- Learning occurs best in a positive atmosphere with sufficient attention and stimulation;
- Learning is a process: it is not the destination that matters (most) but the road towards it;
- Especially with professional community workers, it is extremely important to acknowledge and appreciate the knowledge and skills that they already have. Reinforcement of success works better than a focus on mistakes.

Training a group of facilitators reveals in more than one way similarities with running an MFA group. In order to facilitate learning, information uptake is enhanced by group atmosphere, acceptance towards critical feedback, compliments and support. Moreover, the process involves learning by doing: the training itself consists of following MFA practices all along.

6 Overview of a possible training

In the following, a three- plus four-day workshop, based on the building blocks of the modules (see the next chapter), gives a general overview. This involves three days of basic skills training plus four days of further and booster training. It can be seen simply as an example for inspiration.

6.1 Objectives of a training in the MFA

For your trainees to become a knowledgeable and skilled MFA facilitator in the field, it is important that they have or gain:

- Knowledge and skills in working with groups – understanding and awareness of the dynamics of groups, plus the development stages in the evolving maturity of groups;
- Knowledge and skills in working with families – understanding and awareness of family dynamics;
- A deep understanding of the theory and the concept of the MFA and the underlying principles;
- An understanding of the specific role of the MFA facilitator;
- The skills and the mindset to maintain this role during sessions at critical incidents;
- The ability to initiate a group;
- The ability to design and (co)facilitate each session;
- The ability to sustain group facilitation over a period of time, until facilitation can be successfully transferred to a new facilitator or until conclusion of the group.

Day 1
Module 1: Welcome and introduction
Module 2: Our organisation, its target groups and setting goals
Module 3: The role of facilitators

Day 2
Module 4: Working with ice-breakers or energisers
Module 5: Mentalisation

Day 3
Module 6: Structure of group and sessions
Module 7: Focus on teams
Module 9: Taster

Example of a practical assignment
Designing and facilitating a session requires teamwork. Planning a session takes place beforehand. Generally, the number of facilitators in a session is small. Two facilitators are usually sufficient. A planning session focuses around the core subject, theme or issue within the group. This determines the type of activities employed.

As part of the training, you can create subteams (using existing teams or at random) and have each team plan a session. For instance, a difficult issue was mentioned that came up in a group – how to solve it? The exercise may be: please think what you can do to work with this issue?

It is a good idea to create a schedule, with a detailed time frame (including estimated duration of activities in minutes, time of breaks etc.) and needed materials.

Further, while planning a session, it is recommended to divide tasks: who is responsible for facilitating and who for co-facilitating what part of the session?

In the next training day, you reflect with the group on the experiences and the lessons learned. This gives you also the opportunity to adjust your training to the needs of the participants based on the challenges that they encountered.

6.2 Training Part 2

Day 1
Working with the field experiences
Module 6: Structure MFA of group and sessions
Module 5: Mentalisation
Module 4: Working with ice-breakers or energisers

Day 2
Visit to an MFA group session led by two of the participants
Reflection session based on the observations
Module 8: Focus on a topic

Day 3
Module 4: Working with ice-breakers or energisers
Module 8: Focus on a topic, for example domestic violence
Module 5: Mentalisation
Practical assignment

Day 4
Working with the field experiences
Module 3: The role of facilitators
Module 7: Focus on teams
Module 10: Closing

7

Modules as building blocks

The modules can provide you with the building blocks for the training. You can go back to the earlier ones any time you think you need to. Further, you can combine different training techniques (such as explaining, practicing, role playing or reflecting) to work with every block.

Keep in mind that the headings 1 to 10 are representing the main focus of the module. However, it is more about foreground–background, based on the trainers' experiences in the field, earlier trainings and the content of the modules before the one you are dealing with. So you can see it as building up layers of knowledge and skills and weaving these new knowledge and skills into the experiences that already exist.

As a ground rule, the modules until number 7 contain the basic requirements before the participants can start with a practical assignment.

Every module has objectives, a general description, illustrations of activities or referrals to manual C for exercises and a picture of a PowerPoint slide, when applicable.

In annex II, you will find a list of key messages (bullet points) grouped around a couple of topics.

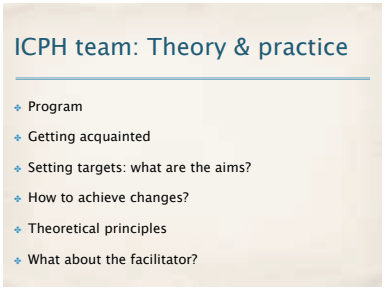
For you as a trainer, part C (the MFA manual for facilitators) is also an important resource. The content of that part is structured a little bit different to give you more flexibility to design your training. In the table below, we connect the chapters and/or paragraphs of the manual for facilitators to the topic of the modules.

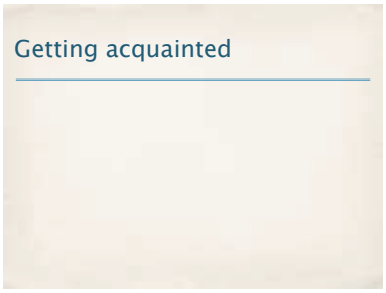
Module	Facilitators manual
Welcome and introduction	
Our organisation, its target groups and setting goals	Chapter 1: Working with families in conflict-affected areas and humanitarian settings Chapter 2: Understanding the MFA
The role of the facilitator	Chapter 3: Understanding groups Chapter 4: Facilitating groups Chapter 10: Keeping up to standards as a professional
Working with ice-breakers or energisers	Chapter 6: Designing and facilitating sessions Annex I
Mentalisation	Chapter 5: Facilitating MFA groups
Structure of groups and session	Chapter 6: Designing and facilitating sessions Chapter 7: Starting phase of MFA groups Annex III Annex IV Annex V
Focus on team	Chapter 8: Performing phase Annex II
Home violence	Chapter 8: Performing phase
Taster	Chapter 7.2: Tasting
Evaluation and closing	Chapter 9: The final phase and closure

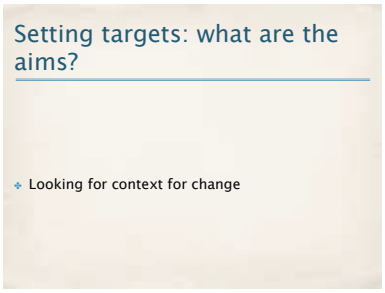
Module 1: Welcome and introduction

Objectives

- Get to know each other.
- Introduction to the programme.
- Agree on ground rules for the training.







M1.1 Introduction

A first session starts with getting to know each other, learning each other's names ('what does your name stand for', for instance?) or sharing other kinds of general information. As the MFA involves standing up, moving around as well as sitting in small subgroups, it will be nice to get used to this varying method by employing an activity that invites people to be physically active. A game to become familiar with names is tossing a ball around, mentioning either your own name or the name of the person you received the ball from, etc. To share some other information, you can ask one of the participants to organise the others by geographical orientation: 'if you live north of … you stand there', etc.

M1.2 The training programme

What is the aim of the group? What will be the expected outcomes of the training? Answers to these questions are important baselines for the onset of a new training group.

Further, as community workers may bring different levels of expertise in working with groups, some work on group dynamics may be helpful. For instance, the different stages

groups in general go through may be worthwhile to discuss here. It can't be a course on group dynamics however; an MFA training usually has the character of learning by doing and making extensive use of reflective thinking.

At the start of the training, it is probably helpful if the participants have an overview of the schedule.

M1.3 Ground rules

In the training, you need to take care of agreement about rules and appointments (i.e. who takes care of what) on how to manage the sessions, as participants will have to take off in their own groups. That is, you may have some ideas of what rules to include. Further, group members can work out additional suggestions. These may be discussed within small subgroups and then collected.

The first step in working with groups asks for a guarantee of maximum safety. Clear agreements have to be made about sharing information within and not outside of the group, working hours (i.e. time to start and stop), home assignments, and expectations about tasks and activities. How to cope with phone calls (and mobile phones in general) and absence are just a few of the issues that need to be discussed here.

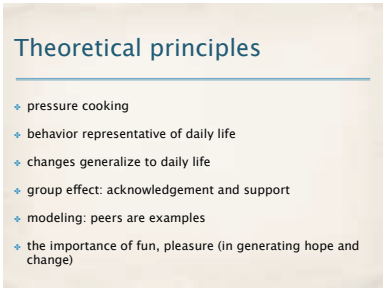
The emphasis is on defining group rules. These may be derived from a group discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of a certain behaviour or issue. It is important to note that different opinions are worthwhile: they open windows for stories and new ideas.

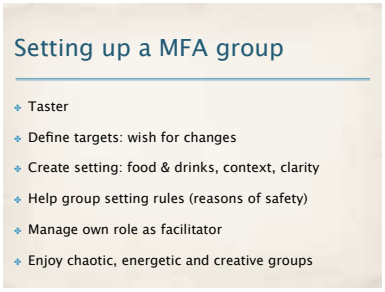
'Hit or smack'
Any subject that gives rise to many differences of opinion can be used in a way that was introduced by the video clip produced by the Marlborough Family Service team: 'Hit or smack'. Many people do differ in fact on the issue of whether it is allowed to hit or smack your child as a way of correcting behaviour. An elegant method to elicit these differences is to pass a doll around and say: 'Imagine, this is your child; it is crying loud and continuously – how would you stop her?' To your neighbour (sitting next to you): 'How would you stop it? Show me please!' And then go on and on until each has demonstrated his or her preferred way of dealing with the crying baby. Then differences are weighed; a best solution is picked.

Module 2: Our organisation, its target groups and setting goals

Objectives

- Introduce participants with basic principles of MFA.
- Identify the needs of the organisation's target group(s).
- Clarify the organisation's expectations of MFA facilitators.





M2.1 Introduce participants to the basic principles of MFA

Some explanation is needed about what MFA stands for. What are the backgrounds, and why may it be applicable or helpful to the specific context? A (brief) PowerPoint presentation to provide a basic outline may make sense here. Teams may be offered trainings in a variety of interventions. Usually, methods are like fashion: new developments overshadow old ones quickly. In its introductory phase, it is wise to describe and illustrate the intention of the method. Before the training, it may even be recommended to offer a presentation first – just to raise curiosity, motivation and also clarity: it may not be the intervention of first choice for everyone.

The core principles of MFA are outlined here for the first time. You will address them over and over and elaborate on them during the next days of training.

M2.2 Identify the needs of the organisation's target group(s)

With whom will the trainees be working? Will they be working with women, mothers, youth or families? Will fathers be able to join? Is an outing part of your programme, or is this outside the scope of your responsibility? Many questions about the people that are intended to benefit from the programme guide the choices you will make. The trainees you work with will bring their own expectations of the needs of their target groups. They will also inform you of their wider context – do local authorities approve and support their work? Is it being facilitated? Mobility is a realistic restraint that may come up. In a group in the West Bank, on one occasion the participants chose to have the session in the home of one of the participants when she was unable to travel.

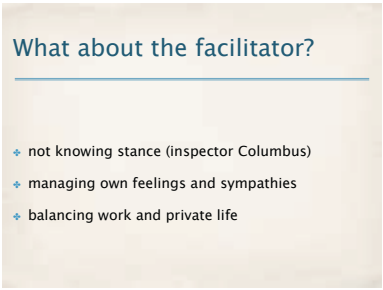
M2.3 Clarify the organisation's expectations of MFA facilitators

The trainer will work in line with the project's aims, values and principles. When more organisations are involved in the design and start of a project, time will have been spent on the goals, the procedures etc.

Module 3: The role of facilitators

Objectives

- Feel familiar in working with groups and families.
- Be clear about the role and responsibility of facilitators.
- Understand the code of conduct, ethics and values, personal biases and prejudices.
- Know and act according to personal boundaries.
- Understand the principle of confidentiality.



M3.1 Feel familiar in working with groups and families

Working with groups

It is possible to write a complete book on working with groups; in fact, many exist. Groups go through stages when they meet regularly for a certain period. At the same time, every meeting is characterised by certain dynamics. These are influenced by the structure of the group: is the facilitator acting in a directive way and explaining most of the time (e.g. psycho-education or teaching) or is he/she emphasising participation and contributions by the members? The last option is part of MFA groups. Safety, participation and examining commonalities and differences are crucial to the success of a group.

The facilitator has the responsibility to take care of the group dynamics. He or she will see to it that members are involved; if not, then a facilitator will attend to that (in a respectful way).

Family dynamics

Families are regarded as systems and groups. They present dynamics that are comparable to groups of members that do not live together or are not related by heritage or name. The difference for families is that they are organised with defined roles and functions. Parents of course have different responsibilities than children (although at times these have become mixed). Families therefore are organised around certain tasks (earning finances, learning and playing, raising children etc.) and reveal a degree of coherence and attachment among their members.

Different families invited together in a multi-family group setting can be seen as individual systems in a group and show similarities to just any other group.

Working with families and children

There are advantages and disadvantages of working with groups of adults and children together. Moreover, the children may vary in age. We have worked with groups with children ranging from one and a half to 17 years of age. In this module, these advantages and challenges are being discussed. Ideally, participants of the training are put to work here. They will need to think about the decision to work with parts of or complete families. Is there a possibility or wish to include fathers, for example? Again, what are the advantages and what are the disadvantages of doing so?

The trainer may explain here the systemic approach of the MFA: it is a contextual approach involving those persons that live together in daily life. The aim of the MFA is to make changes to difficult circumstances for precisely these people. To do so, a choice needs to be made to work with which subsystem? Parents, women, men, children, teenagers?

One way to do this is to divide the group in subgroups and ask each subgroup to work out the (dis)advantages of involving a specific subsystem. After discussion, perspectives are shared within the large group.

M3.2 What are the role and responsibility of facilitators?

One of the crucial core principles of the MFA is the modest and withdrawn role of the facilitator. The facilitator refrains from a role of being the expert. The general attitude within the MFA is that parents or participants are the experts, based on their experience. They remain at all times responsible for their own children; neither facilitators nor trainers take over that responsibility. As the task of the facilitator is to set up an atmosphere of exchange and sharing of experiences, the trainer also employs this during the training. The trainer explains that he or she will be 'sitting on his/her hands'. This is difficult because, on many occasions, group leaders are used to feeling responsible for group interaction and the provision of information. During the training, exercises will help to practice this, often with a new and different attitude. For instance, pay attention to not use 'I' or 'We' when directing the group; or focus on how to involve as many participants in a group by using circular questions – 'What do you think X wants to say about this?' 'If Y was here, how would he respond to this?' Circular questioning, in general, is a very much connecting technique – it binds people. The matter here relates to the quality of communication: open-ended questions, circular questioning, queuing, nonjudgemental responses etc. are important in establishing exchange. Participants will feel respected and acknowledged: by eliciting their expertise and experiences, they will start to feel empowered.

There are of course various ways of exercising with this. In general, this relates to the way you want participants to communicate with each other (inside and outside of the group; the group functions as a laboratory in that sense). Once the basis has been explained and experienced with, as a trainer you have to take care you get back to it repeatedly.

Next, some attention needs to be devoted on working together as facilitators in a group session. In general, no more than two or maximally three facilitators are needed. Further, it is wise beforehand to divide roles and responsibilities. Facilitators need to find a position in the group that maximises the way they can help each other. During the training, this can be experimented with.

M3.3 Code of conduct, ethics, values and prejudice

It may seem self-evident, but it is nevertheless important to stress the awareness of a code of conduct and ethics. For a trainer, it is important to model what you teach. The facilitators who are being trained need to bring that across to their participants in the same way. Important rules of thumb are:

- When giving feedback, start positive, then phrase critical feedback a in constructive way;
- Feedback may be directed at behaviour ('what you did or say'), not focused on personal characteristics ('you are an arrogant person');
- Be curious, ask questions;
- Don't judge, ask questions;
- Beware of your own values.

The last point needs some reflection. You might think of a special exercise to elaborate on that. Because many values are implicit, they lead to (implicit) judgements. To make you feel aware of core values, the following activity might help you.

Activity 1 (from Deir Ghossoon group session)

Two pieces of paper are divided among group members. Based on what is on their papers several couples have within the group have to find each other.

Activity 2 (from Deir Ghossoon group session)

A sun is drawn on a flip chart. Every member is invited to add a core value of 'being a mother' next to it. The contributions can lead to a discussion on women's rights but illustrate core values at the same time. This is a nice exercise to examine agreements and differences in opinions.

M3.4 Personal boundaries

Groups can be both rewarding and demanding, in particular when you feel rather close to the participants (and their groups of families on the background). The MFA principle of 'sitting on your hands' helps you to remind yourself of your task as a trainer to maximise the feeling of responsibility (for learning and group membership) in the facilitators participating in your training.

Further, the balance between work and family and leisure time (or any other obligation) is often nuanced. In particular, when your work is close to where you live and there is a feeling of responsibility, you may put more effort in your work than you want. Have you decided for yourself what your limits are? Is this a topic for discussion in your team? With what kind of division in time do you feel most comfortable? How is your own health best served?

M3.5 Confidentiality

The groups that your facilitators will work with may consist of people familiar to each other and living close in communities. In any group, confidentiality is important; it is necessary for a feeling of safety. You may need to make this explicit at the start of the training.

Module 4: Working with ice-breakers or energisers

Objectives

- Knowing to evaluate and to 'read' participants' level of arousal.
- Having some games and exercises in mind to use.
- Relying on and being able to motivate the group to come up with a playful or relaxing activity.

M4.1 Knowing to evaluate and to 'read' participants' level of arousal

Humans (as well as animals) respond to stress in a characteristic way. The response involves all bodily systems (brain, heart, hormonal). Typically, in case of extreme stress (such as in the case of traumatic events), three responses occur: fight, flight or freeze. This is more automatic than a person may want it to be. It is just a very normal reaction to abnormal circumstances. Only later, when there is the opportunity to think (back), thoughts arise about wanting to have done something different.

In reaction to stressful circumstances, energy levels may rise as a preparation for the body and mind to respond to emergency. In other words: there is an increase of arousal. When arousal increases, considerate thinking and planning happens less; these processes decline. Responding is oriented at 'survival', not as much at learning. Learning capacities therefore decrease.

For your group to be successful learners, their arousal level should be optimal. This means that it should be within an adequate zone. Both too little arousal (think of an after-lunch dip) as well as too much arousal (in case of excitement or anxiety) can occur.

A careful estimate of the arousal level is therefore needed. It is helpful to just sense the general atmosphere:

- Are the participants interested or involved (attention)?
- Do they contribute (participation)?
- Is the effect that they are having of the group changing?

M4.2 Having some games and exercises in mind to use

When you sense that there is not an adequate arousal level in the group, you may use an energiser or game or relaxation exercise to restore the atmosphere. See also part C.

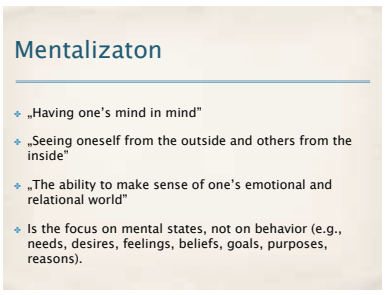
M4.3 Relying on and being able to motivate the group to come up with a playful or relaxing activity

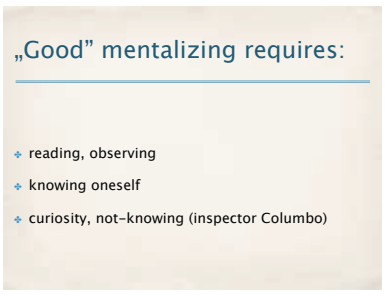
In addition to the above, and in line with the importance of facilitating participants' feeling of competency (empowerment), it may be worthwhile to ask the group members to present an activity to use. In particular, in a training for future facilitators, that provides the opportunity to involve them and have a 'learn by doing' experience.

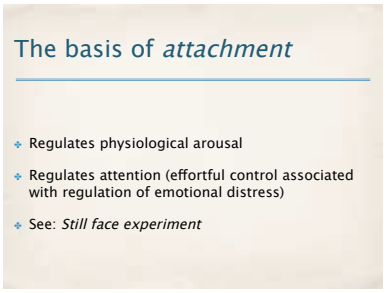
Module 5: Mentalisation

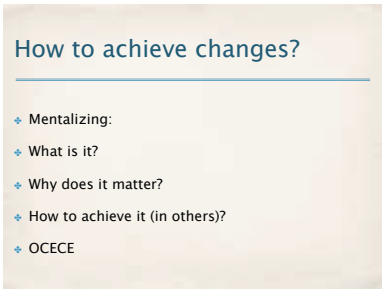
Objectives

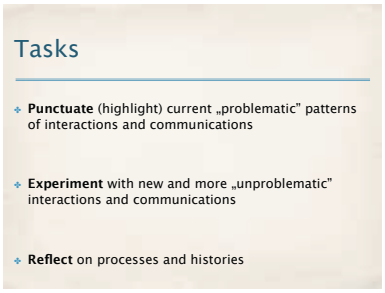
- Understanding the concept of mentalising.
- Understanding emotions and feelings.
- Understand and practice the not-knowing stance.
- Understand and practice communication skills in groups.

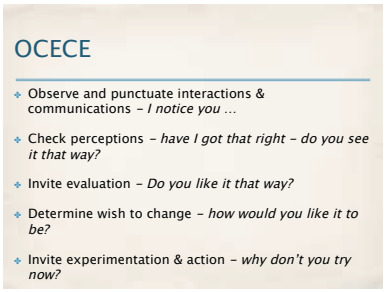












M5.1 Mentalising

'Mentalising' is an abstract construct and refers to the capacity to 'seeing oneself through the eyes of the other'. It is related to various other themes in the field of relationships such as empathy, respect or curiosity. However, it is not the same. Mentalising directs your thoughts and behaviour; it influences what you do. What you do is in response to the perceived needs seen in the other person.

A good example of the inherited tendency to mentalise is the videoclip that you can find on YouTube, called The Still Face Experiment (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apzXGEbZht0). In this clip, the mother is first of all sensitively responding to her baby but then turns away and returns with a blank face. That is, she doesn't show any warm sensitive expression while looking at her baby. Her baby first tries to get her attention and then gradually gets more and more frustrated. When the mother returns to her responding attitude, the relationship is easily restored.

In a nutshell, this reflects the inherent capacity for attachment and bonding. Most mothers and infants learn that intuitively. A baby who has a responsive, caring (sensitive) relationship develops a sense of (basic) trust and a sense of competency ('I can make my mother do this or that…') and autonomy (with basic trust and a feeling of being understood, new experiences are possible). A growing positive interaction with the enlarging outside world develops.

The lessons of these developmental steps for adults and children mentalising are that:

- Interactions are dependent on mutual understanding;
- Needs, wishes, thoughts and beliefs need to be 'read' and understood;
- Communication is crucial;
- Curiosity and a not-knowing stance is central to communication – there has to be a wish to understand the other;
- An awareness of how emotional states 'look like' is helpful – looking at a face, what is it telling you?

M5.2 Understanding emotions and feelings

Emotions and feelings are states of the mind and body that show or reveal what is happening. They influence the way a person acts, or what he/she says. The word is derived from 'emovere', which means motion, so emotions put things in motion, cause movement.

Emotional states are usually understood in an implicit way. However, in fact, they are really tied to certain thoughts, beliefs and values that all of us have. So they matter, they reveal what people find important and therefore reveal a piece of their identity. Paying attention to one's emotional states will help somebody to understand oneself and have the sense of being understood. This is of course important for the experience of social support. This is the difference between 'I know exactly how you (must) feel' as opposed to 'I'd like to understand better – can you tell me how you feel?'

An activity that is meant to increase awareness of emotions and feelings is:
Work in pairs. Draw a body map (either on the floor or against the wall) by drawing the contours of the body; write emotional states where you feel them most. Discuss with your partner what you drew.

M5.3 The not-knowing stance

It has been mentioned a few times in this manual already: a natural sense of curiosity is helpful to make people feel respected and understood. It facilitates people explaining and telling more. A good example of the not-knowing stance was provided by the television character Inspector Columbo – a police detective wearing a large raincoat, who was a little peculiar and had a talent for confronting people with honest questions such as: 'But what I don't completely understand yet … is …'; or 'Let me get this completely right …, so …'. He would ask these questions on the doorstep, just on his way out. So it was also a matter of timing – which is of course also the case in your groups (not on the doorstep though).

M5.4 Communication skills in groups

There are a few techniques to facilitate communication in groups. The aim is to increase the exchange and telling of stories. The more stories, the less unknown members feel.

Some techniques:

- Ask questions; use open-ended questions;
- Use circular questions; for example, 'what do you think your neighbour would say to this?';
- Work in subgroups or pairs – and bring results into the larger group;
- Use the 'fishbowl' technique – create an inner and outer circle for discussion;
- Employ a torch and/or the OCECE technique (see part C, paragraph 5.1) to start (thinking about) change.

Starting change

When team (or family) dynamics have known a certain pattern for a while, it is difficult to change. Nevertheless, to function with fewer problems, some changes will be needed. For interactions within groups or families to change, first of all there is a need to stop, then to observe, check, evaluate, choose alternatives and experiment with new behaviour (OCECE). This is difficult to do and needs practice, but it is important to try. Your trainees will need a tool to be effective.

Observe – Do I see this right?

Check – Do others see this as well?

Evaluate – Is this the way you want it? What are advantages, what are disadvantages?

Choose alternatives – What is a different way of doing/solving this? Who has a suggestion?

Experiment – Can you try it? What do you need in order to try it? Who can help you?

Module 6: Structure of group and sessions

Objectives

- Know the structure of MFA groups.
- Be able to flexibly use the structure of each session.

M6.1 Structure of MFA groups

Like any kind of group, MFA groups have the following general sequence:

- Getting acquainted;
- Focus on problem, in MFA problematic relationships;
- Creating setting for change (experiment with alternative behaviour);
- Closing.

In fact, this progress of groups is set in motion by normal group dynamics. These stages occur in nearly every group.

M6.2 Structure of a MFA session

Each MFA session has a certain order:

Ice-breaker, energiser or relaxation exercise

After an estimate of the general energy level in the group, a choice may be made for an activity directed at increasing or decreasing energy and arousal. Usually after lunch, an energiser is needed. Some facilitators or trainers don't like energisers much. It is not an obligation to employ them – however, when you work with children or youngsters but also with adults, the playful part that energisers bring along is very worthwhile.

Exercise

Ask around or organise at-random subgroups and work on the following question: What kind of games did you play as a child; and, second, which ones did you like most and why?

Core activity related to goal.

Every MFA session has been carefully planned. The planning meeting is important, just like the training session itself is. Beforehand there is a general idea (per family, per team) of core issues that are being shared in the group. These may be problem oriented. However, they may be also related to resources, strengths and coping abilities. Overall, it is the process during the activity that matters, less than the result or product. The focus of the facilitator – and you as a trainer – is on the interactions and relationships between group members.

Reflection
As a trainer you seek to find how participants learn (this has been discussed earlier in the manual). During the training, for instance after an activity, you incorporate an opportunity to look back, to reflect on experiences. This is when learning takes place the most.

M6.3 The use of subgroups

Working with groups has the enormous advantage of using subgroups. In particular, when families or teams or any natural kind of group are joined in a multi-group setting, there is the opportunity to work with this. For instance, you can work with the families or teams or in fact with any subgroup that you think may be helpful. For instance, work with all women and men separately, with all volunteers, facilitators and supervisors separately. Or just with various participants at random. This is used frequently: just assign a number or a kind of fruit to every person in the group and have them work together (all apples, all bananas, etc.). Bringing back the results in the larger group gives the opportunity to learn from each other.

Module 7: Focus on teams

Objectives

- Understand the importance of peer support, within teams.
- Recognise the role of the team and organisation in self-care.
- Know how to use intercollegial consultation and supervision.
- Understand and make use of resources.

M7.1 Peer support

The training is oriented to empowering facilitators who, in turn, empower participants. Therefore, as part of the training, the use of peer feedback and support is demonstrated by emphasising the team's functioning during the training.

M7.2 Recognise the role of the team and organisation in self-care

How do team members guarantee their healthy balance between work(load) and private life? What are the resources that team members have? Is the training a way of providing self-care as well? These issues can be discussed during the training.

M7.3 Know how to use intercollegial consultation and supervision

A professional method to work with difficulties that may arise during the groups that facilitators run is the issue of intercollegial consultation and supervision. A professional colleague who is an outsider to the group (but an insider of or familiar with the MFA) may be excellent in eliciting those critical questions that help you to solve the obstacle. Do mention the use of intercollegial consultation and supervision in your training.

Module 8: Focus on a topic, for example domestic violence

Each session has in its structure a focus on a specific problem or topic. It depends on the group and the objectives to determine in what range these topics differentiate, but in the end most of the time you end up with the really difficult ones. In this module, domestic violence is the topic used as an example of how to structure MFA sessions. Further, it is an example of the attitude of the MFA facilitators dealing with these topics in their sessions. Lastly, domestic violence is unfortunately frequently associated with stress within the families, and it is a serious risk factor for the development of many children and for the quality of life of adults as well.

Objectives

- Understanding the adverse impact of stress and the multi-causality of home violence.
- Being capable of discussing home violence in a group.
- Being capable of intervening in the cycle of stress and violence.

M8.1 Understanding the adverse impact of stress and the multi-causality of home violence

Shame and guilt are feelings that are widely present and prevent many people from speaking about difficulties. Having a child that is less 'perfect', being unemployed, having little finances, having a husband or brother or daughter in prison, being raped or abused: these are all examples of subjects that people don't like to talk about. Domestic violence often is a subject like that. At the same time, some myths exist around the occurrence of domestic violence. These are as follows.

Men are perpetrators, women victims.
The way (some or many) women express their aggressive feelings may be different from the way men express theirs, but it is aggression just the same.

The best way to help children is to take them away.
At least in Western European countries, it has been believed for a long time that the best way to prevent children from being hurt because of violence in the home by their parent(s) is to take them away as soon as possible. However, this causes the child to be separated from his or her family, having to adapt to new temporary surroundings and not knowing how the parents are coping. The best way is to secure safety as soon as possible and, when arousal and stress have decreased, make adults aware of their children's needs. Most parents feel ashamed.

Violence comes out of the intention to hurt, damage or destroy.
Violence has frequently been caused by an escalation of feelings of frustration and powerlessness. Usually, many circumstances contribute to the occurrence of outbursts and verbal and physical aggression. It is therefore important to make adults (and children) aware of the escalation of arousal leading to violence.

M8.2 Being capable of discussing domestic violence in a group

Due to feelings of shame, participants may be very reluctant to talk about violence in the home; in particular, this occurs when core values are at hand ('Who is to blame?'). Nevertheless, it will be in the interest of nearly everyone to stop the cycle.

For the group to be able to discuss these vulnerable matters, safety and privacy will have to be settled in the group culture. Next, basic communication skills will have been practiced. In particular, communication skills that help people to orient themselves in relationships will be helpful. Besides active listening and abstaining from prejudice, these can include circular questioning and a true curiosity or not-knowing stance (really trying to understand; to 'see' it). All attempts to mentalise are good here.

Techniques to get group members to share their stories will strengthen support and a sense of acknowledgement and recognition.

Sculptures
The relationships between members of groups can be demonstrated by using sculptures or living statues. They are helpful as an assessment tool: to understand better the distance between and effective states among the members. Subsequently, it is possible to ask in what way the positions should be changed in order to realise improvement.

M8.3 Being capable of intervening in the cycle of stress and violence

A de-escalation clock is helpful here.

De-escalation clock
Work in subgroups. Think of an example when violence had occurred in the home situation. Draw on a large piece of paper a clock, with hours marked. Now imagine: at noon the violent outburst took place. Now go back in time gradually and discuss and mark on the paper what happened before. What was the crucial time/event that led to the start of this escalation?

In the second round, continue in these subgroups. Now work out an alternative scene: what could have been done or happened that would have altered the outcome, leading to a more positive interaction? Take some time to think this over together.

Module 9: Taster

Objectives

- Understanding the use of a taster.
- Being able to set up an informative session such as a taster.

There are good experiences with organising a 'taster' meeting before the real start of a new group. A taster is an MFA-like session with the aim to give information on the contents and the organisation of the group ('What can be expected?') while there is the opportunity to meet other participants informally. Most of the time, (future) participants who are interested are rather anxious. Providing a warm welcome, starting with some food and beverages, will reduce this anxiety. It can also be helpful to invite an 'MFA-senior', who has participated in a group earlier and could explain well what to expect.

Why to have and how to organise a taster session is the subject of this module. In some settings, MFA facilitators have difficulties to motivate people to participate and to start a group. In the training, the organisation of a taster may be practiced. Attention will be devoted to:

- Invitational letter;
- Organisation of the taster session (time and place);
- Explanation of the MFA group;
- Involving an 'MFA-senior'.

The recommendation here is to hand over a brief flyer describing the planning and background of the MFA group initiative, together with contact information.

In short, a taster is helpful to explain the aim and to take away some of the barriers that people may see. Meeting others most of the time removes or at least reduces these barriers.

Module 10: Evaluation and closing

Objectives

- Understand the importance of closing of groups.
- Use evaluation to improve work.
- Be able to manage closing.

M10.1 Understand the importance of closing of groups

There is a difference between open and closed groups. Open groups have a long-lasting continuity and participants leave and enter regularly. Attention is being paid to entering and leaving the group of course. There is always a sufficient number of persons that maintain the established group coherence and culture.

Closed groups, on the other hand, stop after a limited time or after a restricted number of sessions. The same people participate all the time. Sometimes limited finances direct the choice to start open versus closed formats. With closed groups, the facilitators are available of course to start up new groups; they can divide their time and professional efforts over a larger number of people. However, there may be other reasons too. In any case, the group members are of course entitled to continue their meetings at their own initiative.

Whether a participant leaves a group or whether the complete group finalises the MFA meetings, focus on the closing of the group is very important and needs special attention. In particular, in areas of working with people who experienced sudden losses, migration and other dramatic forms of separation, saying goodbye in a respectful and good way is crucial. At least it is important not to avoid this procedure.

M10.2 Evaluation

Evaluating the training workshop provides an opportunity for participants to give their feedback to the trainer and to clarify whether objectives and expectations were realistic. Further, feedback is important for the quality of the training over time and for the trainer's professional development.

M10.3 Manage closing

First of all, the final session should be anticipated beforehand and announced in time. Second, time and attention needs to be devoted to how each participant's contributions were appreciated. The feeling that these contributions mattered and made a difference to others increases the power of social support.

A way to make farewell personal is to ask group members to bring a personal object from their homes. During the session, everyone is asked to talk about their choice and the

meaning of the object. This bringing an object may also be a good activity earlier in the group process.

An alternative could be the invited exchange of little notes, cards or verbal messages among group members. There are numerous ways to elicit this.

Usually it is nice to ‘celebrate’ the way in which participants have worked together. The facilitators together with the participants often choose to bring food and drinks to have a nice get-together.

Annex I - Challenges for a trainer in MFA

Given the nonauthoritative and flexible nature of facilitation, it is not unusual for situations to arise that can compromise the effectiveness of the training. Trainers need to stay alert to these possibilities and be prepared to deal with them. The following are suggestions for handling such situations.

One person dominates the discussion or continually interrupts it.
Make it clear that you want input from everyone: 'Can I hear from someone that hasn't spoken yet?' Use activities that require everyone's participation, i.e. gathering questions and ideas. If a person consistently talks for long periods of time, without singling out that person, specify that you would like everyone to be brief. If someone continually interrupts, acknowledge the value of their input and point out that, in the interest of the group, interruptions should be kept to a minimum. Offer to speak to them at the break or after

the session. Keep track of people who wish to speak by 'stacking' (verbally list names of people, indicating the order in which people will speak).

In case the behaviour is related to a change that this person wants to make, or a difficulty in maintaining relationships that occur in other settings as well, you may consider to make it the focus of intervention, in an MFA style that is. Use the OCECE technique, involve other participants, remain respectful at all times of course but look for a window of opportunity to change.

Several people refuse to talk or participate.

If some people refuse to participate in the large group, you might try dividing the group into pairs, threes or fours. People who will not speak up in front of the full group will sometimes feel more comfortable sharing in a small group.

Distribute index cards and ask participants to respond to a question on the card. This is more comfortable for those who are shy in groups; you can shuffle the cards and have each person read someone else's response.

The group becomes distracted and loses its focus.

Refocusing a group sometimes means interrupting someone or interrupting a two-way argument that is going nowhere. You may be hesitant about this but remind the participants of the original topic and put the side-topic on hold until the main topic is resolved.

An offensive comment (e.g. pertaining to race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) from a participant evokes angry reaction or shocked silence from the group.
If anyone makes an offensive comment, expect conflict. Your job is to control the processing of what happened and allow the workshop to continue. You can ask people to vent their opinion but without argument. Examine the consequences of the comments for others; use mentalising efforts. Basically, it will be against the group's ground rules (being respectful).

Someone asks you if you're prejudiced, against who, and tries to test you.

The best response is honesty. Acknowledging that you – like everyone else – have learned prejudice and are working against it will establish respect and lack of pretence in the group.

Someone verbally attacks your leadership and completely throws you off.

Usually they are very upset. DO NOT TAKE THE ATTACK PERSONALLY. Explain your rationale. Discuss it with the person privately during a break. If you actually erred, apologise and continue.

Someone presents inaccurate information or strays away from the focus.
Allow participants to point this out and/or refute the comment. You should invite other participants to correct the misinformation; if they don't, correct it yourself. If you don't know the answer, acknowledge and commit to looking into it.

Group participant states: 'It's all hopeless anyway; you can't change people's attitudes. Why even try?'

Acknowledge their feelings. Point out the hopelessness, without buying into it yourself. Point out that you have seen attitudes change and grow by doing this work. Don't get into a debate about whether the work makes a difference – you wouldn't be doing it if it didn't.

You find yourself disliking a participant.
Remember that you are a human being and entitled to your own personal likes and dislikes. However, you must also keep in mind that, as a facilitator, your neutrality is essential to the success of a workshop. Acknowledge your feelings to yourself, and move on.

Annex II - Bullet points MFA training

Activities that facilitate group interaction	
Create subgroups (apple orange; 1 2 3 4 etc.); work a few minutes to think about a specific problem – then make an inventory in the whole group	Maximising opinions
Work at high speed – give little time to think about problems, to put pressure	Increases thinking activity
Use reflection; make a list (flip chart) of different opinions	Repetition, overview, memorising; increasing chance of implementation (‘taking home’)
Involve all subgroups – don’t skip one (will feel neglected)	Being left out will decrease motivation
If giving turns, be aware how you do that	For instance, take note of time
Use ice-breakers etc. (several examples were used)	Impacting arousal level and optimal working atmosphere
Humour and sense of relativity are tremendously important, as are fun and fantasy	The importance of play
Beware of using ‘we’ and ‘I’; chose ‘you’ and ‘as a group’ more	The group has a sense of responsibility; create an atmosphere of working together
Try the not-knowing stance (hide your expertise) – see some example questions below	Will contribute to increased involvement of group members; sense of empowerment and they might surprise
Use role play (‘enactment’); invite people to play and demonstrate	Create real-life situations
Curiosity	Curiosity invites people to tell more about their lives

Key questions: examples	
Open-ended questions!	What do you think? How do you feel? What are your thoughts about? …
Circular (indirect) questions	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?
Increase group interaction	Can you ask your neighbour what her experiences are? Listening to this response, what do you think?

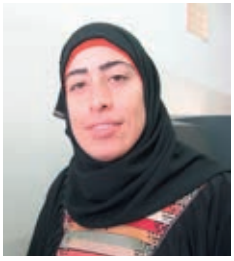
Activities that facilitate group interaction	
Ice-breakers (such as a reception party, sitting–standing; but also imagination-relaxation exercises (derived from mindfulness); use of culturally known games)	Maximise creativity; give what is needed (e.g. when arousal in the room – offer relaxation; imagination exercise – facilitates concentration)
Use a flip chart; have participants write and present themselves	Maximise involvement (and use in their own language J)
Have participants prepare an activity themselves; offer help when preparing (e.g. an outing)	Maximise responsibility for group activity
Reception party with personal characteristics	Creates interest and facilitates bonding within group
Use of words (split in two) (CBR team)	Leads to movement and facilitates discussion
Use of drawing of sun and hearts for making an inventory of opinions about a theme (e.g. women's rights, CBR team)	Attractive way to make an inventory of assumptions, attitudes, thoughts and to stimulate discussion – making it visible

Activities that facilitate group interaction	
Evaluation of the group by using rope (spider network) (CBR team)	Nice way to end the group session in positive way
Storytelling	Use of fantasy; own involvement needed to encourage fantasy
Evaluate and feedback	Constructive looking back and learning opportunity
Fish-bowl technique (inner and outer circle)	Have subgroups listen to each other and comment on others in a structured way. Thereby examine differences in opinion
Mentalising: recaptured	Importance of mirroring (your child; some other important person, maybe a group member); reading and observing the signals
Making an inventory of emotions	Think about variety of emotions
Body maps	Realising how intimate it is to be drawn. Use of a body map to locate feelings and emotions; discuss these; importance of bodily experience of emotions
Lifeline (derived from Narrative Exposure Therapy [NET])	Use of a lifeline with flowers and stones in a group; take account of reluctance to discuss stones (difficult experiences) within the group; use of flowers (good experiences) can be powerful
Queen's day (crowning)	Positive ending
Memory lane (personal objects); can be theme-related, e.g. intergenerational aspects	Increase of personal involvement and inner-group connection

Activities that facilitate group interaction	
Case example, use of role play	Demonstrate others, find key aspects of problem
Sculpture or frozen statue	Use a sculpture of living statue to discover dynamic for change
Escalation clocks	Examine the sequence of events leading to escalation; find prevention strategies

The CBR workers and the manual-writing team of ICPH, Foundation Centrum '45, Sioo and War Trauma Foundation

Ameenah Jabali


Fadia Mardawi

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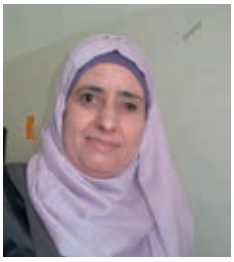
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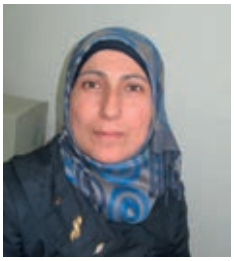
Ola Abu Salah

Raja' Alaza'ar

Rudaina Abu Jarad

Wisam Khatatbeh

Yoke van der Meulen

Suzan M. Al Mitwalli

Shiraz H. Nasr

Trudy Mooren

Marguerithe de Man

Relinde Reiffers

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War Trauma Foundation
Nienoord 5
1112 XE Diemen
The Netherlands
T +31(0)20 6 438 538
F +31(0)20 6 474 580
E info@wartrauma.nl
I www.wartrauma.nl