

SLUM AID PROJECT (SAP)

IN- HOUSE COUNSELLING TRAINING WORKSHOP

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report contains the proceedings of an in-house counselling workshop organized by Slum Aid Project for all the staff members/Volunteers. The

workshop was an outcome of the Annual Staff Performance Appraisal conducted by the different heads of departments.

During this exercise in 2007, staff members from the Program Department expressed the need to improve their counselling skills since they face various challenges both in the field and the Secretariat during the counselling and mediation process. Similarly, staff members from other departments like Finance and Administration revealed that sometimes clients visit the Secretariat when all Program staff are out on official duty and they are faced with the challenge of attending to them.

It was against this background that Management recommended that an in-house counselling workshop for all staff/ Volunteers regardless of the departments be organised. The workshop was facilitated by The Reverend Grace Ndyabahika, a Lecturer in the Department of Women and Gender Studies. Emphasis was put on domestic violence (DV), Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE) and Reproductive Health (RH) issues because these are SAP's major areas of focus.

1.1 *Participants' Introductions*

Self-introductions were made during which members mentioned their names, marital status, their likes and dislikes and lastly what they would like to see in place both at home and the workplace.

1.1.1 Likes

The participants mentioned the following as their likes or desires;

- Development and growth of SAP
- Teamwork being strengthened in the organization
- Spirit of togetherness
- Assisting women to exercise their rights to the best of their ability
- Acquisition of shelter to facilitate the counselling process

1.1.2 Dislikes

Participants' dislikes were;

- Enmity and discrimination amongst people
- People who do not appreciate others
- Seeing women and children suffering
- Divisionism among people
- Seeing the rights of people suppressed
- Gossiping
- Selfishness

1.1.3 what we would like to see at home and the workplace

- Growth of SAP to greater heights
- The spirit of togetherness in homes

The facilitator then gave an exercise whereby every participant was required to draw a tree with all its parts (roots, stem, leaves, fruits, bark, branches, pods etc...).

Participants were to imagine that they were the trees. They had to identify themselves by naming the trees and stating their locations (address). They had to put value/ usage to each part of the tree.

The trees represented a human being plus a spirit and mind. Trees are only physical while human beings are intrinsically physical, spiritual, mental and social. People who are sexually abused, battered and are generally disadvantaged are normal like any other person but are deprived of their human rights to live fully as God wants them to be. Some people are deprived of their space in terms of lack of freedom of expression, movement and socialization.

The role of a social worker and a counsellor is to possibly bring such people back to the world of freedom, which will enable them to live a normal life. Through counselling, they can once again experience love, freedom, justice and hope. If the counsellor lacks sensitivity, she/he can end up creating more confusion for the counselee.

1.2 Background to Counselling

The facilitator gave a brief on the background of counselling and she mentioned that counselling started in the church. People had a time of reflection on their lives after which they would seek advice from church elders and priests on how to go about certain elements that confronted them in their day-to-day lives. They were then counselled accordingly. In the long run, it was viewed as one way of comforting people and offering advice on several issues that people are faced with in life. As a result of the success registered in church, other sectors like hospitals, schools, prisons and other organizations took on counselling to be part and person of their daily work.

1.3 Basic Requirements in Counselling

The facilitator mentioned that in an organization, it is very important for people to have a shared vision and mission in order for them to collectively set strategies for achieving the desired goal.

Counselling involves people, interest and skills. Only human beings are counselled and can be able to counsel and without interest and skills, someone cannot conduct successful counselling.

1.4 Supportive Tools

The facilitator mentioned some tools in the context of the work that SAP is mandated to do (DV, CSAE and RH) to be:

- Time

- Money
- Food
- Legal Aid
- Shelter among others.

Other supportive mechanisms include;

- Listening
- Sharing
- Understanding someone's problem
- Receiving someone well
- Giving a client time
- Encouraging them to tell their story

Showing a client that they are valued, esteemed and special, comforts them and helps in building trust and confidence in the counsellor.

She stressed the importance of a Counsellor being able to offer something more than advise in some cases. For instance, in a case of DV or CSAE, SAP may deem it necessary to offer accommodation, food and/or Legal Aid to a client as the case is being followed up. In some cases, it is important to study the client and attend to their immediate needs (if any) before going any further with the counselling. An example given was when one is faced with a case of a battered woman. This lady's immediate need is to get adequate treatment to restore her health before anything else can be done.

1.3.1 Why Counsel Human Beings

Human beings are counselled because they differ from other living things in so many ways such as:

- They are emotional
- Have wisdom of knowledge and understanding
- Are rational
- Have senses
- Socialize
- Have brains
- Have physical, mental and spiritual aspirations

Therefore different human beings are counselled differently depending on the need. Some of the common human needs identified were:

- Ability to feel secure and able to survive
- To feel connected with and attached to others
- To trust in others and oneself
- To feel valued, esteemed and special
- To experience self as a sexual being
- To communicate and be listened to
- To have the opportunity to achieve one's potential

- To see others show one another love and affection
- To see family members acting in responsible and respectful ways
- To know what family members and the outside world expects in terms of how to act in sexual and non-sexual ways

2.0 PEOPLE TYPES

These refer to psychological patterns, processes or ways in which people choose to make judgements. These are fundamental to our work and relationships. All human beings have traits of counselling e.g. psychological; these are patterns, processes or ways people choose to make judgements. As leaders, social workers and counsellors, there is need to identify patterns within oneself to assist in knowing people's personalities and who they are in relation to others, more specifically those they serve. People types dictate the way a counsellor relates to a client. Secondly, types help one to understand why someone behaves or decides to act the way he/she does. Types give clues on why certain things work for some people and not for other and why some people are good at certain things while others are not.

At the end of this session, participants were given an opportunity to do a personal test of their types. *Myers Briggs type theory* is what was borrowed (See Appendix III of this report).

One's personality or what drives them will determine whether they will be good counsellors or not.

We should value our clients by:

- Making them feel special
- Receiving them well
- Listening to them attentively
- Sharing information with them as much as possible
- Encouraging them
- Providing them with a comfortable and decent room for counselling
- Building rapport

2.1 Helping Skills For Social Workers and Counsellors

Although in Uganda there is a saying that, "*Anyone can do anything,*" Psychologists agree that people possess varied unique talent. Since we can only give what we have, it is important to find out before we proceed, what we possess individually as our unique personal approach to counselling.

2.2 Qualities of a Good Counsellor

Some of the qualities mentioned were,

- Should be a role model

- Should be compassionate. One being deeply moved by the suffering of another person and has the desire to help that person reduce the pain. However, the counsellor should not be over involved or swept off his feet by the case or else he may fail to come up with appropriate measures of dealing with the case. Calmly observe, weigh the situation in order to take the right measures.
- Should ensure confidentiality
- Should be patient
- Should have interest and time for the client
- Should be able to guide and control the session
- Should have empathy. The ability to understand what a person is feeling while remaining able to help them.
- Does not assume for the client
- Must have wisdom and ability to care for others. Counsellors are a source of security
- Should have humility: This is the ability to recognize your own limitations as well as your strengths. Being able to avoid patronizing or practicing control over the client
- A good counsellor does not take on the role of a “rescuer” or “saviour” to the client but is a servant leader who simply helps to facilitate them to plan for their lives. He/she allows the counselees to make their personal decisions on how some of their problems may be solved.

All in all, a good counsellor always wins the confidence and trust of his/her client. It is important for counsellors to seek assistance or refer clients if a case proves difficult.

2.3 Counselling Skills

The facilitator emphasized that listening with understanding are the master keys to good counselling. The first stage in helping is to understand the problem. The counsellor must first understand the problem before he/she thinks of how to help solve it. Listening and understanding the problem helps the counsellor to guide the client in making the right decision. The counsellors should not belittle or overwhelm the problem. The ethics of a counsellor include confidence, dignity and professionalism.

Ethical Questions:

- Should men counsel women?
 - How should a counsellor treat a rapist or a murderer?
1. Pray: If the client believes in the power of prayer, it is important to pray
 2. Referrals: No counsellor is able to meet every client’s needs. Clients should be referred to other professionals or agencies for cases one cannot handle. To be able to refer reflects good judgement but not failure. There is need to

explain to the client why referrals are made. E.g. Suicidal cases should be referred to the right places

3. Men can counsel women and vice versa.
4. Get involved in the client's life in a professional way e.g. where does the client live and what kind of lifestyle is he/she leading

2.4 **Counselling Process**

The facilitator emphasized the importance of listening with understanding. She said that these two combined, are the master keys to good counselling. The counselling session should not be prolonged. The counsellor should have skills of controlling the session. He/she should avoid patronizing and being judgemental as these may be detrimental to the whole process. Counsellors should be understanding (have empathy) and always apply wisdom in order to have a successful session.

2.4.1 **Stages in Counselling**

- At the start, clients may act rough, contradict their statements and may show distrust to the counsellor. The counsellor should accept and encourage their expression while setting limits to any abuse. Clients should be allowed to tell their story in their own words. This is helpful for the following reasons:
 - It shows the counsellors respect for them
 - It gives the counsellor access to the client's feelings as they narrate their stories
 - It indicates the client's ability to communicate
 - While listening to the problem, repeat the statements to emphasize them e.g. ask; what *do you mean by...? What if...?*
- Together with your client, arrange for further meetings
- If possible, pay a visit to your client's home. This will give the counsellor a clear background and will create a better relationship between the two.

2.4.2 **Client's Personal History**

The counsellor should identify the client's name, location, age, marital status, level of education, religious affiliation, occupation and number of children. Involve the client in identifying the problem and counselling arrangements by asking what she/he wants or whether she/he is comfortable. How the counsellor begins the counselling session depends on the client's willingness to talk or present the problem. The counsellor must have skills of establishing a relationship with the client.

NB: Each case is unique and should therefore be treated/ approached differently.

Clients should be gradually led to a point of reconciliation and healing. Reconciliation is one's deliberate act of will to let go of anger and resentment against the offender through forgiveness, acceptance and understanding. These are essential stages of healing. The client should acknowledge that she/he has been hurt, offended or in this case, betrayed. She/he has a right to be angry. She/he should voluntarily decide to release and let go of the nasty feelings and hurt. In most cases, there's need for the client and the offender to discuss and support each other to get what they both want.

At this point, the facilitator distributed an illustration of two goats (See Appendix-II of this report), which were tied together facing opposite directions. Both of the goats wanted to eat the plants that were in front of them but because of the way they were tied, none of them managed to get to the plants at the same time. They eventually agreed to eat one plant at a time. They went on one side and when they finished, they went on the other side. That way, they were able to satisfy their desires. The picture further demonstrates that sometimes, human beings fight over small issues, which once discussed, can be concluded without hurting any party. The cause of conflict sometimes is selfishness and inability of people to sacrifice for the sake of others. These two elements are crucial in making people around us happy.

2.5 Why is DV and CSAE on the increase

Participants agreed that these two mentioned social evils were on the increase and the reasons given were:

- Greed and selfishness by mainly the men
- Some men are adamant to change
- Moral degeneration
- Men's demands from the women are sometimes overwhelming

3.0 ROLE PLAYS

The facilitator requested for two volunteers to briefly act a scene of a sex worker who was seeking counselling on what she could do to quit that business. The second role-play was about a woman who wanted to separate with her spouse whom she accused of having sex with their cow.

The rest of the participants were expected to closely watch and give their comments at the end of the role-play. This session was intended to provide a summary of a counselling session and to give a practical demonstration to the participants for clarity.

3.1 Comments from the participants from the two role plays

3.1.1 Positives

- The volunteers acted so well and brought out the true picture of the problem

- Counsellors offered a comfortable environment to the client
- The counsellors had good listening skills and gave the clients a warm welcome

3.1.2 Areas for improvement

- The counsellor in the first role-play provided a solution to the client, which was not right. Clients are given options and guided into making the right decisions but not a counsellor to decide for them. This is very dangerous because if the solution backfires, it will be the counsellor to blame.
- The client in the first role-play did not clearly explain her problem. This in turn may affect the decision taken.
- The counsellors made the decisions prematurely. The counsellor should not rush into making a judgement lest he creates more harm than good.
- The counsellors did not give enough time to the client to tell her story. Much as the counsellor should limit the session, he/she should be careful not to cut the client short in order to get all the required information. The more information a counsellor gets, the more chances she/he stands in guiding the client to make the right decision.
- In the second role-play, the counsellor concurred with the women that her spouse was surely mad. This was not right because she can easily tell her spouse that, "...even the counsellor said you are mad..." and this could breed a sour relationship between the counsellor and the male client.
- Counsellors should always consider referring and consulting for cases that are beyond their capacity to handle. For instance, a teenager counselling a couple that has been married for so long yet she is not married herself may not understand issues of marriage. It is advisable for her to involve other people who are experienced in that field.

Points to note:

- The client's first impression matters in terms of building rapport with the counsellor
- The counsellor should probe in order to understand everything. One should not assume or imagine a story.
- A counsellor's office should not look luxurious because it may distract the attention of the client and also raise their temptation and desires
- When counselling difficult cases, clear the room of any harmful objects that can be used by the clients to harm each other or you.
- Position the couple in such a way that they sit apart or else they will fight
- Counsellors should not take sides
- Counsellors should not be judgemental
- Counsellors should either be age mates with their clients or experienced in marital matters in order to handle them effectively

4.0 QUESTIONS ARISING

- a) **How much time should a counselling session take?**

Participants agreed that a counselling session in SAP should last for 20-30 minutes. It is good to tactfully limit the client in the first meeting so that he/she does not make it a habit to narrate endless stories every time he/she visits the counsellor. Counselling should not start in the first meeting. Know the problem first and take time to study the client deeper before you begin counselling him/her. The first meeting prior to the counselling session should last for 15-20 minutes.

It is important for the counsellor to leave the clients looking forward to coming back.

- b) What happens when a client narrates a story for a long time?**
A counsellor should take charge of the situation. The client should not overpower him/her. Counsellors should have guiding skills, which will enable them control the session from being unnecessarily prolonged.
- c) Should the counsellor believe every story or should she/he judge that the bleeding client is the trouble causer?**
No: But with the skills of the counsellor, the truth slowly comes out as the story unfolds. Secondly, in cases of domestic violence, the counsellor should bare in mind that women tolerate violence for a long time, the day she pours out her anger, she does it aggressively but that does not imply that she is the trouble causer. The counsellor should be in position to probe for the actual cause of the problem.
- d) Should a client have more than one counsellor?**
A client should have one counsellor to the end unless otherwise. If a counsellor deems it necessary to involve a colleague, he/she should first consult from the client.
- e) If a client wants material support, which a counsellor cannot offer, what happens?**
Counsellors need to know their limits and resources. In that case, there is need to tactfully explain to the client that much as you would like to help, you are not in position to. However, an office should have basics like drinking water, tissue for the clients to access whenever they need them.
- f) Should Counsellors make decisions for clients? If it backfires, who is responsible?**
Counsellors should never decide for clients. Their role is to provide options from which they guide clients to make the best decision. They save themselves the burden of being held responsible if the option failed to work. Even if a counsellor knows the answer to a particular problem presented, he/she should NEVER decide for a client. Instead, help the clients to look at opportunities that enable them to make the right choices.

g) Where does counselling begin? Do things like developing trust and confidence of the client form part of the counselling?

Yes: Trust and confidence are very important. If a client loses trust in a counsellor, he/she is advised to hand him over to another counsellor. Clients should be able to feel secure and protected otherwise they may not fully open up.

Counselling begins when one walks in the counsellor's office. The counselling process follows after the first meeting and not before. The first meeting is meant to establish a relationship between the counsellor and the client.

h) How does a counsellor approach a rude and violent client?

In such a circumstance, the counsellor has to be polite and calm. He/she should learn tactics of cooling the clients down. The counsellor should take command. One's character, personality determines whether the client will cool down or not.

I) Can a counsellor counsel him/herself?

Good counsellors start with themselves. If a counsellor is to be a role model, it is important that he/she begins by checking his/her own character before counselling others. This encourages clients to respect you and to take the advice given to them. In some cases, counsellors give personal experience to empower and encourage others. If a counsellor has a poor record, nothing about him will earn him respect. It is generally important to counsel ourselves first before we counsel others.

All in all, the facilitator mentioned that the success of a counselling session depends on the skills possessed by the counsellor.

5.0 RECOMMENDATION

The facilitator recommended that SAP staff should undertake short courses in counselling to enhance their skills further.

6.0 CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

The facilitator concluded by urging participants to act positively and aggressively against any human injustice in order to have a violence free world where all human beings, irrespective of age, sex, race and social class have space to fully exercise their rights and obligations. There is need to create awareness about the plight of women and children in the right for a.

APPENDIX I

List of Abbreviations

CD	:	Community Development
CSAE	:	Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation
DV	:	Domestic Violence
RH	:	Reproductive Health
SAP	:	Slum Aid Project