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# **MA SOCIAL WORK**

**MASW 201 : WORKING WITH GROUPS**

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**UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY MEGHALAYA**

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# **MASW 201**

## **WORKING WITH GROUPS**

### **Unit-I: Introduction to Group Work**

- Social Group Work: Definition & Concept
- Historical Development of Group Work
- Group work Objectives and Values
- Group Work Principles, Techniques and skills
- Group worker: Roles and Functions

### **Unit-II: Group Dynamics & Theories**

- Group dynamics: Decision-making and problem solving
- Leadership in a Group
- Stages of group Development
- Theories of Social Group Work
- Group work with different groups

### **Unit – III: Tools & Techniques**

- Tools and Techniques in Group Work
- Use of programme media
- Group work recording
- Self as professional

## **MA-SW 201: Working with Groups**

**Units**

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## **Unit – I: Introduction to Group Work**

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### **Unit Structure**

- 1.1 Learning Objectives
- 1.2 Social Group Work: Definition & Concept
- 1.3 Historical Development of Group Work
- 1.4 Group Work Objectives and Values
- 1.5 Group Work Principles, Techniques and Skills
- 1.6 Group Worker: Roles and Functions

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### **1.1 Learning Objectives**

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The learning objectives of Unit I are as follows:

- To learn about Group work as a method of Social Work
- To learn the definitions of group work
- To learn the concept of Social Group Work

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### **1.2 Social Group Work: Definition & Concept**

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A group of people working in the same room, or even on a common project, does not necessarily invoke the group process. If the group is facilitated in a autocratic manner, there may be little opportunity for interaction relating to the work; if there is fractioning within the Scommunication, cooperation, coordination, and commonly understood procedures. If this is present within a group of people, then their performance will be enhanced by their mutual support (both practical and social).

Groups are particularly good at combining talents and providing innovative solutions to possible unfamiliar problems; in cases where there is no well established approach/procedure, the wider skill and knowledge set of the group has a distinct advantage over that of the individual. An ideal group can be seen as a self managing unit. The range of skills provided by its members and the self monitoring which each group performs makes it a reasonably safe recipient for delegated responsibility. Even if a problem could be decided by a single person, there are two main benefits in involving the people who will carry out the decision: •

Firstly, the motivational aspect of participating in the decision will clearly enhance its implementation, and • Secondly, there may well be factors which the implementer understands better than the single person who could supposedly have decided alone. From the individual's point of view, there is the added incentive that through belonging to a group each can participate in achievements well beyond his/her potential. Less idealistically, the group provides an environment where the individual's self-perceived level of responsibility and authority is enhanced, in an environment where accountability is shared: thus providing a perfect motivator through enhanced self-esteem coupled with low stress. When people work in groups, there are two quite separate issues involved: • The first is the task and the problems involved in getting the job done. Frequently this is the only issue which the group considers, and • The second is the process of the group work itself: the mechanisms by which the group acts as a unit.

Group work is exactly what the term implies: students work together in groups to complete assessments and projects. Group work aims to prepare students with the collaborative skills needed for the professional world. Here, individual work is broken into parts and steps that students work through together.

Group work refers to a collaborative learning environment where students work through problems and assessments together. Students can delegate roles and responsibilities, pool their knowledge and skills and receive support from one another.

Everyone knows what a group is in general. When two persons or more come together and interact at one place it may be called a group. The group may be defined in various ways. Given below are a few important definitions of group and each of these definitions emphasises one or the other important features of the group. 1) R.M. Williams (1951) "A social group is a given aggregate of people playing inter-related roles and recognized by themselves or others as a unit of interaction." Here it can be said group is an aggregate of some people. The roles of the group members are inter-related. The group is considered as unit. 2) R.M. MacIver (1953) "By group we mean any collection of social beings who enter into distinctive social relationships with one another." It is clear that there must be social relationships between the individual members of a group. 3) David (1968) " A social psychological group is an organised system of two or more individuals who are interrelated so that the system performs some functions, has a standard set of the role relationship among its members and has a set of norms that regulate the function of the group and each of its

members.” 4) Kretch, Crutchfield and Ballachy (1962) defined psychological group “ as two or more persons who meet the following conditions : (i) the relations among the members are independent, each member’s behavior influences the behavior of each of the others, (ii) the members ‘share on ideology’ – a set of beliefs, values and norms which regulate their mutual conduct.”

The word “group” has many meanings. Generally, we use the term ‘group’ keeping in mind three main points: i) where a number of persons are sitting or working together. The essential thing is the physical proximity of a number of people being together at a given time with or without any common purpose; ii) where persons are classified as belonging to an association. Sometimes it is seen that people may have no relationship with each other but they have some common characteristics and we classify them as a group; iii) where persons belong to an organisation. This group has a definite structure, and people in this group have a sense of belongingness to the given organization.

A child’s social development takes place gradually as the child advances in age. To fulfill physical needs, children perform many functions. They exhibit signs of reacting to individuals who they identify as fulfilling their needs. Then they start understanding objects and individuals in their environment. As children grow older their patterns of play and other activities also change considerably. The feelings of “I” and “MINE” and then “YOU” and “YOURS” develop. Sharing things, asserting one’s rights, co-operation, etc. are learnt by children in the first stage of their socialisation. Initially they belong to a small world of children, all nearly their own age, although differences may vary with the arrangement in different groups. They are constantly assimilating many things by direct coaching, training, imitation, spontaneous reaction, repeated experience and so on. Living in a group they gradually develop the sentiments, opinion, interests, habits, desires etc. Interaction and communication plays a vital role in this regard. To know the meaning of the group more clearly you think about all the groups to which you belong, viz., local friends, college friends, music/ dance group and so many.

Generally, people join in groups due to various needs and these include

- i) Satisfaction of important psychological and social needs, viz., receiving affection and attention, for attaining belongingness.
- ii) Achievement of goal smoothly and easily. By working with others, the person performs the task well than doing it alone.

- iii) Getting knowledge and information on various issues which are not available at one place .
- iv) Getting safety and security. In psychology we define Group as the study of organisations and their behaviour.

Psychology studies groups and explores the control of the individual within the group setting. Social, organizational and group psychology are all powerful areas of study that look at many factors that drive group behaviour and the decisions that a group makes. Depending on the group's influence, the group member's individuality is often relinquished for the greater good of the group. It is the role of social psychology to uncover why.

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### **1.3 Historical Development of Group Work**

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Social group work as a basic method of social work, utilizes groups, group dynamics as well as inherent synergy, in order to catalyse growth in the participating individuals. Social Work with groups represents a broad domain of direct social work practice (Garvin, Gutierrez & Galinsky, 2004). Social Group Work has its acceptance in all the settings practicing social work. Middleman and Wood (1990) have noted that for the practice to qualify as social work with groups, four essential conditions must be met: the worker should focus attention on helping the group members become a system of mutual aid; the worker must understand the role of group process itself as the primary force responsible for individual and collective change; the group worker must seek to enhance group autonomy; the group worker helps the group members experience their groupness upon their termination.

In trying to understand the origins of social group work we need to start with clubs and recreation movements, which are the forerunners of social group work. To develop a broad perspective concerning the potential uses of groups in social work practice, it is helpful to understand the developmental milestones that have happened in the study of groups and their implications in the practice of group work over the years. Such a historical perspective will also give you a firm foundation upon which a knowledge base can be built upon for effective group work practice.

Group work was seen as a movement before it became a field. From a field, it became a method, and back to a field (Papell in Middleman and Goldberg, 1988). Group work played an important role in dealing with a number of shifts happening in the U.S. in the late-19th century and early-20th century: the industrialization of the U.S.; large population shifts from rural to urban centers, and; the enormous wave of immigration, mainly to U.S. urban areas (Konopka, 1972; Garvin, 1997). The history of social work may be considered in particular focus is on three major phases: (1) the formation of a group work association, 1930s; (2) the merger into the National Association of Social Workers, 1950s; and (3) the rebirth of group work, 1970s. All the same one may consider some developments occurring between 1910 and 1920, those who were concerned with adult education, recreation, and community work began to realise the full potential of group work. They understood better that groups could be used to help people participate effectively in their communities, to enrich people's lives and to support those persons whose primary relationship were not satisfying or dysfunctional. So did they become aware of the potential of groups for helping people acquire social skills as well as problem-solving skills. They began to make good use of groups in preventing delinquency and in rehabilitating those maladjusted. The organisations that built the foundation of group work were by nature self-help, informal and recreational ones; they were present in the form of settlement houses, neighbourhood centres, Y's, the Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, Jewish Centers Camps and for that matter even in labour union organising in industries. Later designated as 'group work agencies', the novel element that united these services and appealed most were involvement in small groups, the democratic way of life, community responsibility and perceived membership in activities with implications at national or even global.

Early in 1920, Mary Richmond realised the potentials of working with groups and wrote on the importance of small group psychology. Mary P Follett, a political scientist in 1926 wrote in the book "The New State", that solutions to social problems would 'emerge from the creation of groups in neighborhood and around social interest'. Follett strongly believed in the power of the small groups formed in communities to solve social problems that neighbors had in common. John Dewey, who proposed and developed the idea of progressive education also found the usefulness of small groups as early as 1933. Dewey perceived social group work method as an application of the principles of progressive education to small informal groups in leisure time settings. Dewey, through his progressive education movement, advocated working with small leisure-time groups (Fatout, M., 1992). The influences of



Follett and Dewey leading thinkers in group work reinforced an individualist perspective that became engrained in group work (Falck interview, 1998).

#### Formation of Club

The first form of group setting could be traced back to Sir George Williams, who organized the hard working labourers of Bridgewater draper shops, towards the Christian way of living. The success of such groups inspired the extension of such group setting to other draper shops or other young men, thereby giving birth to London's Young Men's Christian Association in 1844.

Soon the ripples of YMCA reached the women and girls of Germany and England, encouraging them for Christian companionship. In England, similar movements, having less association with the church, originated in 1855 simultaneously in two places. These were directly led by women - Emma Roberts, who started a prayer union among her friends, and Mrs. Arthur Kennard, who started the General Female Training Institute in London for the nurses returning from Crimean war. The successful working of these two organizations motivated Mrs. Kinniard and Miss Roberts to amalgamate both the organization under one head. Thus, the YWCA came into existence in 1877. Giving due consideration to the less fortunate woman, the privileged women in United States initiated many programmes over the years. One such notable movement was the formation of Union Prayer Circle by Mrs. Marshal O in 1858. This was transformed as boarding home in 1860, and later renamed as the Ladies Christian Union in 1866. Rooms were rented on top floor of the warehouses and equipped to meet the needs of the wage earners in New York.

In America, the Boston YWCA began as an effort of thirty women in 1866 focusing on temporal, moral and religious welfare of their fellow beings. Now both YMCA and YWCA have established themselves as pioneering organizations with active involvement in educational, recreational and religious activities for young men and women. It remains a fact that the publications from these associations that have significantly contributed towards literature of social group work. The contribution from these associations in providing skilled volunteers while practicing group work is tremendous.

The Settlement Movement Social disorganization, the child of industrial revolution, demanded the formation of an organized body to meet the welfare needs of the people bearing the brunt of industrialization. The settlement movement owes its origin to Jane Addams, the founder of the Hull House in Chicago in 1889. The movement focused on the

causes of poverty and functioned through three thrust areas (“three Rs”) – Research, Reform and Residence. Jane and the other pioneers, who believed in the group approach, set the objectives of the movement as follows:-

- 1) The identification of settlement workers with the local area
- 2) The residents of the area could share their learnings of cultural and religious among the needy.
- 3) The responsibility of the group for social reform. The congested immigrant population became the target of most of the settlement workers. There they could observe the changing conditions and needs of the people while matching the various resources to satisfy the needy. They provided a variety of services including educational, health, and legal services, and also advocated changes in social policy.

According to Rameshwari Devi and Ravi Prakash (2004), settlements have also served as centers for classes in English and citizenship, as well as for clubs which gave both older and younger immigrants the best of American culture.

Stanton Coit concentrated his activities in the formation of clubs in the neighbourhood, which would unknowingly develop deep bonding among the community members. He was the founder father of the Neighbourhood Guild, the first American settlement in 1886. Picnics and other recreational activities were taken up so that more youth would participate and develop the settlements to a structured informal association. Woods and Kennedy in the Settlement Horizon have commented that the settlement movements have provided ample opportunities for ‘the actual interplay of association’.

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#### **1.4 Group Work Objectives and Values**

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Observations pertaining to the fact that groups influence the psycho-social and psychological makeup of man have been the bedrock of the theoretical and value base of Social Group Work. “All professions have value preferences that give purpose, meaning and direction to people who practice within them.....Professional values however do not exist separate and apart from societal values; rather professions espouse and champion selected societal values.” (Hepworth and Larsen, 1992,) According to Northen (2007) values are abstract propositions about what is right, desirable or worthwhile. Values of group work refer to how the

practitioner should view and treat people, their goals and how these goals should be reached during the process. In a profession, the values are translated into ethical principles of practice. According to the National Association of Social worker's (NASW) code of ethics "broad ethical principles are based on social work's core values of service, social justice, dignity and worth of individual, importance of human relationships, integrity and competence. These principles set forth ideals to which all social workers should aspire." The basic values of group work deal with human relationships.

These basic values as conceptualized by Northen (2007: 77) are given below:

#### Dignity and Worth

Like in case work and community organization, an important value of Social Group Work is the belief in the inherent worth and dignity of each person. All persons should be accepted as they are and their special strengths recognized. They should be treated with respect irrespective of their differences and similarities and their integrity is of paramount importance. Every individual is unique and has an inherent worth, interactions with them as they use resources and opportunities should not hurt rather should enhance their dignity and individuality. Without fear of negative sanctions, they should have the freedom to express themselves. The group worker should recognize the value that every member no matter whatever are her/his drawbacks and handicaps has worth and deserves to be respected and treated as a dignified member of the society.

#### Social Justice

Inherent in all social work is the value of promoting social justice wherein all should have equal access to resources and opportunities. Everybody has the right to civil liberties and equal opportunity without discrimination as to race, ethnicity religion, social class, gender, sexual orientation, and capacities. They should have access to resources that are essential to meet their basic needs. They have the right to self-determination and to participate in making group, family, or organizational decisions within the limits imposed by the individual's culture and status. Individuals may sometimes need resources that are not available, the worker has to then take on the role of an advocate and take up their cause. S/he may organize support groups and self-help groups to help people cope with the difficult problems of their living.

#### Mutual Responsibility

The value of mutual responsibility is based on the conviction that people are interdependent for survival and fulfilment of their needs. Neither the individual nor the society can be conceived without each other. As individuals interact, they influence and in turn are influenced by each other. They are capable of helping one another. Group work builds on this interdependence, which can become a potent force for development and change. The worker is responsible for helping members to develop patterns of communication and norms of behavior that foster mutual aid. Members should fulfil their responsibility to society by actively participating in the democratic processes.

Northen (2007) is of the view that though social workers are bound by ethical principles outlined in the codes of ethics, they need also to understand and differentially apply these principles when working with groups.

Principles are the fundamental truths tested by observation and experiment which guide action. Over the years from social group work practice, have emerged certain principles that provide a theoretical framework to the practitioners while working with people in groups. They provide a set of guidelines which help them achieve a certain level of competence by guiding practice. 'Social workers with groups have a responsibility to practice within the realm of the accumulated theoretical base, tested interventions, and ethical principles.' (Northen, 2007)

Social science theory is always in a fluid state, as it keeps changing and evolving. The principles of Social Group Work too will keep changing in tandem with our progressive experience and discovery of new insights into social group work as a method of social work. Different authors have outlined different principles of working with groups from time to time, conceptualizing the important areas of focus for the Social Group Worker. It is not possible here to discuss all the principles put forth by different authors, therefore we shall outline the principles propounded by H.B. Trecker, reflecting the earlier and the modern-day thinking, respectively.

In 1948 Harleigh B. Trecker wrote at great length about the principles of Social Group Work in his famous book 'Social Group Work: Principles and Practice'. which is still read widely. The ten principles of Social Group Work as conceptualized by Trecker are briefly discussed below outlining the main points:

The Principle of Planned Group Formation

The Social Group Work process uses a group as a medium for providing services to the individual, hence the formation of a group is a prerequisite for a group worker. Whether a group worker works with groups already functioning or forms her group, s/he should be aware of certain factors while forming a group so that the group has a positive potential for individual growth. A group has to be formed in a planned way before initiating the group work process. From what is explained by Trecker we can say this principle comprises the following fundamentals:

- Groups like individuals are different, evolving, developmental and everchanging and tremendously influential upon the behaviour of individuals.
- The group in Social Group Work must possess elements of conscious design and plan.
- The group worker should not seek to require all groups to be alike nor expect them to meet identical needs.
- The group worker's skill will be evident in the way s/he consciously gives aid at the point of group formation.

In India group formation can become a difficult exercise as the people may lack the motivation to join a group and may do so after much persuasion. So the group worker must have the skill to deal with the resistance of such members. The group worker should be equipped with an in-depth understanding of the client population, and pay attention to interpersonal compatibility and other factors such as age, caste, gender, socio-cultural background etc.

#### The Principle of Specific Group Objectives

Specific objectives of individual and group development must be consciously formulated by the worker in harmony with group wishes and capacities and in keeping with agency function. The group worker should help the members achieve the overall objectives of social work through its own specific objectives, which are to assist individuals to grow and change; supplement emotional and social nourishment; promote democratic participation and remedy individual and social disorganization.

- Agencies and their workers must be aware of what people want from group experiences and help them to get it.

- The group worker who recognizes the need for consciously formulated specific objectives for individuals and groups becomes a purposeful, rather than an unfocused worker and makes the group work in a planned than haphazard exercise.
- Objectives, thus, become a controlling force in the life of the group and the group worker should have clarity about the specific goals s/he wants to achieve along with the benefits s/he is hoping the members would get.
- When the worker focuses on individual and group objectives, s/ he reduces the likelihood of permitting her/his own needs to get in the way of the group.
- S/he helps the members to see their strengths and limitations and set their objectives accordingly, in alignment with the agency's formulated purposes.
- The expectations and aspirations of the members should also be given due weightage while formulating the objectives and activities planned accordingly.

#### The Principle of Purposeful Worker Group

Relationship A consciously purposeful relationship must be established between the worker and the group members based on mutual acceptance. This principle is based on the premise that it is both possible and necessary to create an effective working relationship with a group before the worker can be of any help.

- Before the worker helps the group members to develop meaningful relationships with each other, s/he should first create a meaningful and purposeful relationship with the group.
- The worker's relationship with the group is a major tool, and the quality and strength of this relationship determine the extent to which the group can be helped to the fullest realization of its potential.
- When the group workers adopt the procedures suggested by this principle, they begin their work motivated by an initial desire to understand the group as a basis for helping it.
- By encouraging the group to "be itself" and accepting it as it is, the worker becomes accepted and helpful to the group.

#### The Principle of Continuous Individualization

Groups are different and individuals utilize group experiences in a variety of ways to meet their differing needs; consequently, the principle of continuous individualization must be

practiced by the group worker. Each group has to be seen as unique, different from any other group, like the members in the group.

- When the group worker individualizes a group, she accepts the fact that human beings are naturally different.
- To work with groups in awareness of their differences as well as similarities is a reinforcement of the belief that people have a capacity to change, when given adequate opportunities for and help in changing.
- The worker should be ready for a variety of individual responses rather than a uniformity of response.
- S/he should accept the differences in individual ability and growth; strive to help individuals understand themselves and help them modify their behaviour towards those who have special needs.
- Individualization should be a continuous process on the part of the group worker who accepts the certainty of change.

#### The Principle of Guided Group Interaction

Social Group Work is a method through which individuals in groups in an agency setting are helped by a professionally trained worker who guides their interaction in various program activities. The idea is that they relate themselves with others and experience growth opportunities in accordance with their needs and capacities.

- Interaction is a process whereby two or more persons are in a meaningful contact, whereby their behaviour is modified.
- When people are in groups, the possibility of interaction and inter-stimulation are always present.
- The main source of energy which propels the group is the interaction of the members and the group worker influences this interaction by the quality of her/his participation.
- As the possibility of inter-stimulation through interaction is always present in a group, the Social Group Worker must harness and consciously direct and utilize this natural social process.
- The presence of the worker whose role is to actively influence the type and the degree of interaction, converts the social process into the social group work process.

- The worker is primarily interested in helping to bring about individual growth and social development for the group as a whole as a result of guided group interaction.
- S/he enhances the potential for interaction by helping members to assume participating roles.
- The Social Group Worker uses methods that stimulate the group to the fullest possible analysis and understanding of their own situation and thereupon influence the social interaction of the constituent members of the society.

#### The Principle of Democratic Group Self-Determination

The Principle of self-determination is a core value of the social work philosophy and has to be practiced, irrespective of the method of working. In the Social Group Work method, as in other methods of social work, this principle is of great significance. The idea is to inculcate in the members an ideology of democracy.

- The group must be helped to make its own decisions and determine its own activities, taking the maximum amount of responsibility in line with its capacity and ability.
- The group has a right to make its own choices and the capacity to make satisfactory decisions.
- the group worker aims to encourage an ever-increasing capacity on the part of the group to take responsibility for its actions.
- This principle assumes that groups can develop only when they are given opportunity to behave responsibly but it is to be consciously judged as to how much responsibility a group can be asked to assume at any point in its development.
- The group worker must first help the group to develop a conscious groupself before it can become responsibly self-determining.

#### The Principle of Flexible Functional Organization

Every group has some informal organization of its constituent members that enables it to function. As the group is formed for specific objectives, it should also have a formal organization to help it achieve these objectives. This formal organization should meet a felt need, be flexible, adaptive and should change as the group changes.

- The principle does not imply that group worker should organize the group; rather she should help the group organize itself.



- The group should be encouraged to explore its needs, set its objectives and determine specific functions and helped by the group worker to make its own decisions.
- The worker should help the group to determine who should take the leadership assignments along with the qualifications and expectations, so that the members are aware of what the group expects from them.
- Not only the structural details of this formal organization, but the process through which the worker guides the group to have a formal organization is equally important.
- Group efforts which may be scattered and haphazard become focused when formal organization is made available, as it allows the energies of the group members to be properly channelized.
- Tasks and duties should be identified and allocated in an orderly manner and members helped and encouraged to assume responsibilities. The process of organizing itself is an excellent vehicle for growth.
- The formal group organization should be simple, stable yet flexible, and open to changes as per group needs.
- The experiences of the group members in solving the organizational problems are no less valuable than the other program experiences.

#### The Principle of Progressive Program Experiences

Program in Social Group Work does not only mean the activities or events but is a broad concept that includes the entire range of individual and group relationships, interactions and experiences deliberately planned and carried out with the help of the group worker to achieve the group goals.

- The group worker should not impose her/his program plan on the group but help the group to develop its own program by extending to the group a variety of choices. S/he may only make suggestions as to possible programs.
- The program development is a continuous process and grows out of group potentialities.
- This principle implies that there is starting point for all group programmes

Small beginnings can culminate into bigger and more challenging tasks as the group progresses.

- The program experiences in which the groups engage should begin at the level of member interest, need, experience and competence and should develop in tandem with the developing capacity of the group.
- The worker should help the group to enjoy a progressive series of program experiences in consonance with the group's potential and capacities. The group cannot be expected to do the same thing all the time.
- After success in simple activities, the group can be encouraged to move to more complex experiences.

#### The Principle of Resource Utilization

This principle guides the group worker to utilize the available resources to enrich the content of the group experience for individuals and group as a whole. For this the Social Group Worker must possess knowledge about the resources available in the group, agency and the community. S/he should use her/his skill in locating and then acquainting the group with the various resources which can be utilized by the group for different programs.

- The worker serves as a liaison between the group and the community and her/his ability becomes apparent in the skill with which she draws upon the environment.
- S/he not only helps to stimulate the group to action but also helps them to discover and use the agency and community resources and those within the group. She must ensure that the members procure the required material for the smooth conduct of the group sessions.
- S/he should take initiative in mobilizing both material and human resources and oversee the utilization of the available resources by the members for the common good.

#### The Principle of Evaluation

Continuous evaluation of process and programs in terms of outcomes by the worker, agency and the members is not only desirable, albeit essential. Carefully maintained records can facilitate proper monitoring and evaluation.

- The social group worker should carry out the evaluation of the outcomes in a carefully planned manner.

- Maintaining records in a systematic and orderly way aids the evaluation process.
- Evaluation carried out objectively and neutrally helps in revealing the extent to which the group has been successful in achieving the group goals.
- A feedback from the members along with the observation and assessment of the worker help the group members develop insights into their strengths and weaknesses.
- Evaluation should be done at the end of each session and at the time of the termination.