

Developing Self-Care,

Protection Mechanisms, Psychosocial
Support and Access to Health Services
for Women Exposed to Sexual Violence

Guideline

Prepared by:

Accepting Others Organization

Iraq, Kurdistan Region, Erbil- 2020

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Iraq, Kurdistan Region, Erbil- 2020



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PREAMBLE:

The sector of providing services and social and psychological counseling witnesses a rapid and a continuous development in its content and implementation mechanisms, according to the areas where such projects are implemented, especially in areas that have experienced violent conflicts and emerged from economic or social crises, or migration and displacement, or where various forms of violence prevail, and that had no previous experiences in implementing psychological and social counseling programs, because of the severe psychological effects the conflicts and wars have left upon individuals and the society in general. This includes health services sector as well, which has

also become the most affected sector, and this can be clearly seen and identified in many areas emerging from conflict or in camps hosting the most vulnerable and most in need of constant care, as we often say that the need for social services would have declined if there was a commitment to psychological and social instructions and guidelines. And to confirm this, a statement issued by the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 2008, clarifying that "women must have access to all services to be able protect their rights as provided by national institutions", and that's means that there is a responsibility for workers in this field to enhance

the access for violence-vulnerable women, especially to get access to service centers correctly.

This Guideline is designated for civil activists and social workers to familiarize themselves with the foundations and bases of implementing mechanisms to provide social and psychological support services, and how to help marginalized or affected groups, or those exposed to sexual violence, to obtain access to health services in the right way, especially in post-conflict phase and crises.

This Guideline was prepared in three different tracks, based on modern sources, in reference

to psychological and social support and health services, and then set a set of guidelines and criteria for work, while the third track includes methods-in-use about how to make it functional by activists when exercises, sessions or interviews are required to work in the field of psychosocial and social support.

The Guideline includes basic concepts for working in the field of providing psychosocial and social support services, in addition to educational concepts as well, along with information necessary to acquire work skills in such areas that have a direct impact on people's lives, and a direct touch in guiding them to the correct way in managing their

life affairs. And in order to enhance awareness about the topics mentioned hereunder by workers in such areas, and also by members of the society in general and beneficiaries in particular, leading to the development of special bases in this field to move on and contribute to developing it properly.

Like any other work, this Guideline was implemented in order to be a basic guidance for civil society activists working in the field of providing social and psychological services, and those who communicate with vulnerable groups and displaced and conflict-affected communities. Finally, we do not say that it is a complete work, but it is an im-

portant contribution that can be used and is considered as a complementary to the civil work archive, and workers in the fields of providing and implementing psychological and social support service programs can help vulnerable groups to get access to health services properly, and can get benefit from the information contained therein and enrich their experiences, as it is considered as an update and review for some ideas that have been worked on and require a knowledgeable review.

WHY THIS GUIDELINE?

The mechanisms adopted by organizations or activists work in providing guidance for self-care and psycho-socio support services, like any other areas of health awareness that affect the lives of individuals, whereas (researches conducted by the World Health Organization showed that there is a state of mental health that can be diagnosed with over 30% of patients visiting primary health care centers worldwide) which requires realizing the effects of psychosocial and social support services and taking them into account because of the negative effects they cause if professional principles are not followed.

The implementation of this Guideline comes as part of

(Accepting Others Organization - AOO) Project to help activists working in the field of providing psychological and social services and to get access to health services after years of crises the region has gone through, and it also comes to provide guidance to activists in order to update and develop their skills and knowledge in field work.



BENEFICIARIES OF THIS GUIDELINE:

This Guideline can be considered as a knowledgeable guidance providing a clear picture of the need to rely on professional foundations and standards in work in the field of providing health, psychological and social services, and it is also considered as a contribution to facilitate determining the challenges facing work in such areas.

It is important to note that providing this Guideline comes to the need to promote a culture of psychological and social support with more professionalism, and to work according to the necessity of the intervention, whereas (the main goal of mental health and psychosocial support framework is to facilitate more coher-

ence, consistency and quality in mental health interventions and psychosocial and social support, mental health and psycho-socio support in the UNRWA 2016 context).



GUIDELINE'S METHODOLOGY:

This Guideline is based on open methods and guiding information, as a booklet for activists to benefit from in field work especially, or institutionally as well, since it focuses on the latest resolutions adopted by the international organization in order to help in developing local expertise to work based on the principles and guidelines that help activists to work in providing psychological and social counseling and services in a way that achieves the required positive impact, and this information is also assist them educate others and those who complete the path after them through applying the instructions described under this

Guideline properly, in a way that enhances their social status and helps provide services to beneficiaries.



BASES AND PRINCIPLES OF SELF-CARE:

Self-care is one of the important areas that help individuals protect themselves from exposure and infection to diseases and from problems resulting therefrom, which affect the course of life of individuals, and that others may consider self-

care as the ability of individuals to take care of their lives despite the conditions and challenges they face which leave psychological effects on their lives, which may become the reason for changing their lifestyle and their inability to make the right



decisions, and face the challenges in the right way. It is worth mentioning that some people define "self-care" as any activity that we participate in to take care of our daily personal needs; such as food, bathing, brushing teeth, wearing clean clothes and taking care of health aspects, which is vital to our mental and public health, and ironically, it is something that we frequently ignore, according to what your health status may indicates.

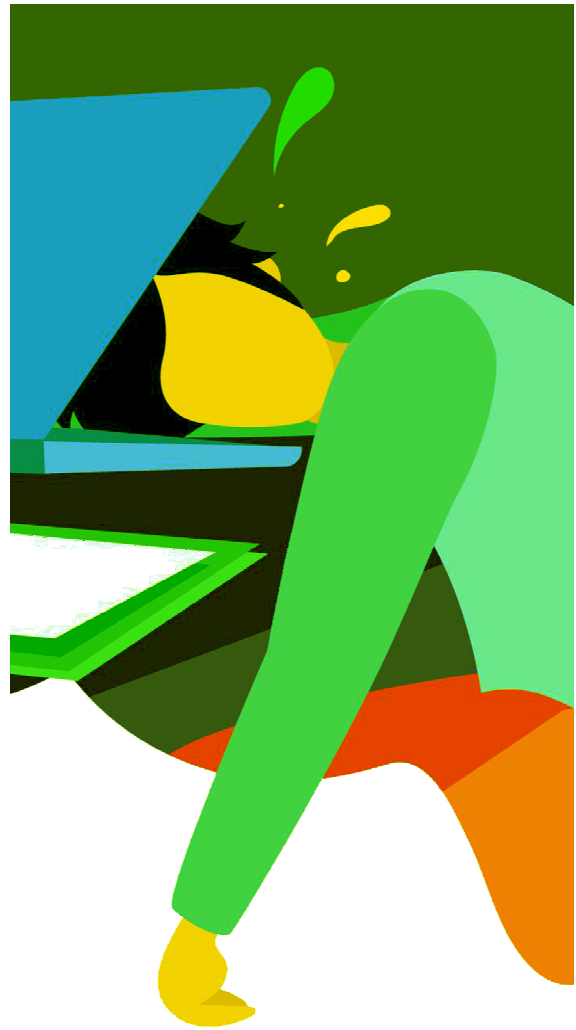
Self-care means that everyone has to know the right way to take care of his mental-psychological health and his so-

cial life properly, which means that self-care does not mean providing services, guidance and skills development only to those who are exposed to psychological trauma, or those who suffer from violence or who suffer in a period of time from symptoms of mental illness / anxiety and stress, or have chronic mental illnesses. Rather, it includes the usual healthy people as well, because self-care means that we do the things that help us do our activities and to practice our lives in the best way.

Usually, the issue of providing guidance and social services to develop the skills of victims of



sexual violence or who are exposed to violence is linked to the issue of self-care so that she can help herself and get out of the existing situation, and to properly meet her basic daily needs. Furthermore; the issue of linking care self-care with providing psychological and social support services for the existence of symptoms among women exposed to violence, shall first complete rehabilitation of his abilities in order to take care of his own situation due to number of indicators, such as loss of appetite or introversion, or because of abuse to which women exposed to violence and due to their inability to maintain good habits for taking care of the family or herself, or increasing the level of tension and her inability to maintain psychological stability and the occurrence of imbalances in maintaining family stability and personal and social relationships.



PROTECTION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT MECHANISMS:

The World Health Organization defines mental health as (a state of well-being in which everyone can realize their own potentials, and to adjust to regular stresses and work productively and beneficially, and to contribute to their local community. The importance of mental health is also highlighted in the WHO Constitution, which states that: It is a state of a complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or disability).

Because of the growing interest in developing protection and psychological support programs for women exposed to sexual violence or gender-based violence, or because of wars, crises, forced displacement or migra-

tion, the protection mechanisms or the organization of psychological support programs especially for women have evolved, as the main goal of organizing frameworks for mental health and psychosocial support means achieving more social stability and developing and improving intervention mechanisms to provide psychosocial and social support services with ease, flexibility



and effectiveness.

Many international organizations offer a different set of mechanisms that share with each other some fundamentals and differ in terms of the approach and programs of the bodies that implement it, as they are directly related to the quality of services, the timing of their delivery or the way they are provided, and the location of implementing such

mechanisms, but what concerns us the most is to provide some mechanisms agreed by the relevant institutions concerned with laying the right foundations for protecting those who are exposed to violence and implementing psychological support programs in the right way, by working according to the following:

- **First:** Health care services help protect the recipient of the service and enhance his ability to take care of himself and empower himself on self-reliance.
- **Second:** Emphasis on providing some social relief services or that is related to the initial needs, to enhance his ability to face the problems that the beneficiaries in their societies are exposed to.
- **Third:** To protect and enhance their knowledge about their rights and to implement the same within the programs of quick response, or that come after framing and providing psychological and social service programs.
- **Fourth:** Working on the basis of the livelihood environment that the beneficiaries of the services live in (IDPs, refugees, women exposed to violence or the children), as it may help in developing their resilience and facing societal challenges in general and personal in particular.
- **Fifth:** Coordination, cooperation and exchange of experiences with the concerned institutions, and building partnerships to discuss common challenges and implement programs that help make psychological protection programs and services effective.

- **Sixth:** Regulating the mechanism for providing the minimum services that meets mental health needs, and organizing it according to the needs of the beneficiaries and the supporting institution / organization program.
- **Seventh:** Sorting and separating between the quality of programs and the services of psychological protection from the displaced persons or refugee communities with the local community.
- **Eighth:** The necessity for the protection programs and the provision of psychological and social support services to be in conformity with the decisions followed by local authorities, with taking into account the applicable rules of conduct and health instructions.

The implementation of high-quality and influential programs in a stable environment through experienced employees or social workers and civil activists who provide psychological counseling and services requires a response to the psychological and social needs of all beneficiary groups, provided that it shall contribute in enhancing their capabilities to bear the conditions in which they live in, while at the same time developing and qualifying those who provide services, doctors, nurses, psychological counselor and social sup-

port services providers to view modern foundations that can be easily carried out in partnership with civil society institutions, especially in camps and post-displacement and conflict societies. Such paths require work in accordance with the application of appropriate protocols and the use of access procedures and communication with victims and beneficiaries in the correct ways, and inform them of the methods they use in implementing their projects and providing services in the light thereof.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR SOCIETIES EMERGING FROM CRISES AND CONFLICTS:



With societies exposed to conflicts or crises and emergencies that lead to waves of displacement and migration or exposure to wars and domination by irregular armed groups, the prob-

lems afflict them get complicates, where vulnerable and marginalized groups in the society (IDPs - refugee children - widows and women exposed to violence in all its forms) are suffering the most,

as well as those with special needs and sometimes women and older men).

The World Health Organization (WHO) views this aspect as: (The targeted groups of WHO programs on mental health and psychosocial support in emergency situations include those exposed to severe stress factors, such as refugees, displaced persons, victims of disasters, terrorism, wars or genocide).

It is necessary to know that societies emerging from conflicts have been exposed to various types of violations, or many groups may have been subjected to various methods of sexual violence, attacks and abuse against children, sexual exploitation or those resulting from displacement and movement to live in camps or places where simplest living services are not available. And; what is resulted from conflicts due to displacement, migration and different psychological pressures and the collapse of trust and imbalance in social re-

lations within the family and the local community, and the collapse of family infrastructures and economic situation according to the nature of the conflict or the environment in which the conflicts occurred, is what requires that caretakers, activists and social support service providers shall have a clear knowledge about the conditions such societies have gone through or to identify the social environment of the beneficiaries of health, psychological and social services before the conflict and what has changed and resulted in the conflict as well, according to the Conflict Training Manual by the United States Peace Institute.

Organizations working in the field of providing psychosocial support services agree that emergency situations or crises are what mean as "a sudden and unplanned event that has severe consequences upon the people whose impact affects them. Such events may include situations of unexpected extreme violence such as kidnapping women and

children, sexual assaults, natural disasters or outbreaks of epidemics, all of which result in serious consequences of mental health and exacerbate psychological and psychosocial problems for those affected in crises and emergencies, which increases the burden on workers in providing mental health services and social support. Therefore, the inclusion of the issue of mental health and psychosocial support is necessary to provide a comprehensive response within a package of services that are provided in response to such crises, wars and emergency situations.

The development of the skills of those providing social support services during conflicts and post-conflicts period requires them to become familiar with methods-in-use to exercise and train in conflict resolution through alternative methods that are based on dialogue and the development of skills for targeted groups in dialogue, which is considered as one of the very important bases in solving issues that may not be effectively

solved by the formal system, especially in the early periods to face challenges resulting from conflicts, since some societies, cultural factors and limited understanding of judicial procedures, financial restrictions or other factors, may limit women's ability to access to the formal justice system. Therefore; "alternative dispute settlement can provide a broader ground through which systemic problems can be solved and to provide solutions if they are carried out in accordance with human rights principles and in a context within which the provided solutions may respect the rights of all parties to victims who are exposed to violence for instance, or who are exposed to domestic violence and who are in urgent need of psychological and social support services on the other hand, therefore; activists and service providers must provide exercises on the use of certain techniques, such as dialogue, mediation and conciliation in a cautious manner in the event of the existence of previous disputes or

threats of violence, and all efforts must be made to protect the identity of the victims and witnesses and to ensure their safety. Furthermore; in such cases, certain techniques shall be applied, such as remote mediation where the conflicting parties do not meet face to face, in order to achieve maximum benefit from the services and guidance provided by activists - The Guide of National Human Rights Institu-

tions on Women's Rights and Gender Equality - Warsaw 2012.

In order for this process to be effective and to achieve the desired results by activists, as they are among the first to meet the people who are exposed to violence or the survivors of conflicts, the following points shall be taken into consideration during operation:

- Coordination, cooperation and communication with organizations that provide such service.
- Communicating with academics and researchers specialized in issues of violence, illnesses and psychological problems.
- Communicating with civil society institutions that implement support programs and activities, social cohesion, and providing health services.
- Communicate with religious and local community leaders to realize the type of programs they implement and gain support and support from them.
- Communicating with media institutions and specialized journalists or those who are following the implementation of programs of providing psychosocial and social support services, to achieve more communication and promotion to programs that help the marginalized groups.
- Communicating and coordinating with health centers based in the communities that provide health and psychological services and social support guidance to realize the systems, information and social and health awareness programs that they implement.

In order to achieve more success by activists and those who provide protection and psychological and social support services during emergency events or post-conflicts and crises periods, the specialists advice about the necessity of executing the work by the activists in accordance with commitment or by taking into consideration the following practical guidelines:

First:

Realizing the effect of the differences in the social environment of the groups with which it is working, targeting and providing protection and psychological and social support services, and directing them to obtain health services, especially mental health properly.

Second:

Realizing the effect of the different location of providing services in the usual social environment in camps or to groups of the displaced and the migrants.

Third:

Realizing the effects of psychological stress on the targeted groups that are emerging from conflicts.

Fourth:

Realizing that the majority of whom psychological support



services are provided are not eligible to receive instructions and instructions and to implement it as it is.

Fifth:

The weakness and lack of focus among those concerned with receiving support and psychological protection services due to the effects of conflicts, displacement and migration.

Sixth:

Rapid anger, anxiety and lack of adaptation with the new environment and situations.

Seventh

Weak or lack of trust in others - given that they are in a new environment and difficult to trust strangers - and the effects of mental distraction.

Eighth:

The effects of customs, traditions and the social and cultural environment on the beneficiaries of protection services and psychological support, and the changing of its paths often due to family or community obligations of the beneficiary groups (in many cases there will be difficulties for activists and workers in the field of health and psychological and social service to communicate because of the nature of the social relations or the patterns towards women, or because of their movement or behavior outside their societies to treatment centers, or the implementation of social programs).



(The Handbook of Psychosocial Support During Emergencies - 2011 Arabic Version by IASC) explains that there is a close interrelation between psychological and social issues with mental health problems during emergency situations. However; most social issues are caused by the following reasons:

Social problems already existed before the state of emergency relating to the individual's relation to the group that is suffering from marginalization, discrimination and political repression.

Social problems arising from the state of emergency such as (family dispersal, safety, stigmatization, destruction of livelihoods, destruction of social networks and community structures, the lack of resources, the decline of trust and the involvement in sexual acts.

Social problems arising from humanitarian assistance resulted from (overcrowding, lack of privacy in camps, undermining community structures and traditional and dependent support mechanisms in aid).

As for the psychological problems caused by crises and emergency situations, which often accompany the groups that are targeted and dealt with, they are described in the following points:

- Problems that already exist, such as severe mental disorder, depression, alcoholism, and other addictive substances.
- Problems caused by emergencies due to unsatisfactory distressed sadness, alcoholism and anxiety disorders including post-trauma distress PTSD.
- Problems arising from the distribution and access to humanitarian aid.
- Activists' access to this information is crucial to avoid social problems and difficulty in communicating and understanding the situation of groups that receive aids, and it is necessary for the work to be carried out in accordance with the correct paths and principles followed by international organizations.

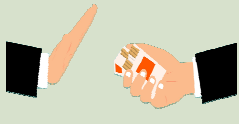
SKILLS AND BASES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT PROVIDERS:

Many of the relevant institutions offer a set of methods and skills that are required by the providers of psychological support services, and as it is necessary for activists and workers in such areas to realize that people will affect by conditions that have caused them psychological and social problems and remain associated with them for a long time, therefore; it is necessary to work according to rules and strategies that help develop positive adaptation by directing beneficiary groups to:


- 1 Encouraging groups that need psychological support to eat as regularly as possible and drink enough water.
- 2 Qualify and guide them to talk and spend time with family and friends.
- 3 Open their imagination to discuss their problems with people they trust.
- 4 Instruct them to perform activities that help them to relax.
- 5 Teach them to do physical exercises.
- 6 Introduce and involve them in problem solving situations, and taking positions within their community and family.
- 7 Guide them to find safe ways to help others in the crisis and to engage in community activities.

In order for this strategy to achieve its goal, it requires that activists discourage negative coping strategies among those who benefit from psychological support services through:


Alert them not to take drugs, to smoke or to drink alcohol.




Not to sleep for long periods, at day or night.




Ensure that they do not work all the time without any rest or relaxation.




Instruct them not to be separated from friends and the people they love.



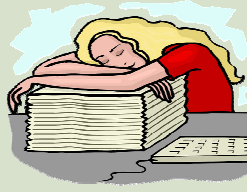
Emphasizing them not to neglect basic personal hygiene.



Educate them about the dangers of engaging in



Educating them not to tell or listen to positive stories, especially such stories that accompanied conflicts, crises or emergency that brought them to what he\she suffering from.



(These strategies were prepared according to what was originally mentioned in the Psychosocial Support Guideline - Abaad Foundation 2017)

In order for activists and workers in the field of psychological and social support services to better perform their duties and tasks assigned to, they need to have some basic skills because they are most likely to seek help for people who are not easy to understand psychological and social difficulties they face, and ways of persuading them to refer those individuals to relevant authorities in the event that a higher level of services is required, or if there is a disease or an imbalance in their mental health for instance, hence; activists and psychological support service providers shall have the following skills:

➤ **First:**

The ability to identify, discover and evaluate cases, and to determine the best way to deal with it.

dealing with stress and providing support and helping groups that need psychological support, especially children and women.

➤ **Second:**

Having the skills of educating parents about the mechanisms of

➤ **Third:**

The skill of providing psychological first-aid properly and at the right time.



➤ **Fourth:**

Commitment to ethics and principles of professional conduct, refrain from causing harm and preserve the privacy of the information he deals with.

➤ **Fifth:**

Emphasizing on the methods of protection and explaining it to the targetted groups in an understandable and a clear manner.

➤ **Sixth:**

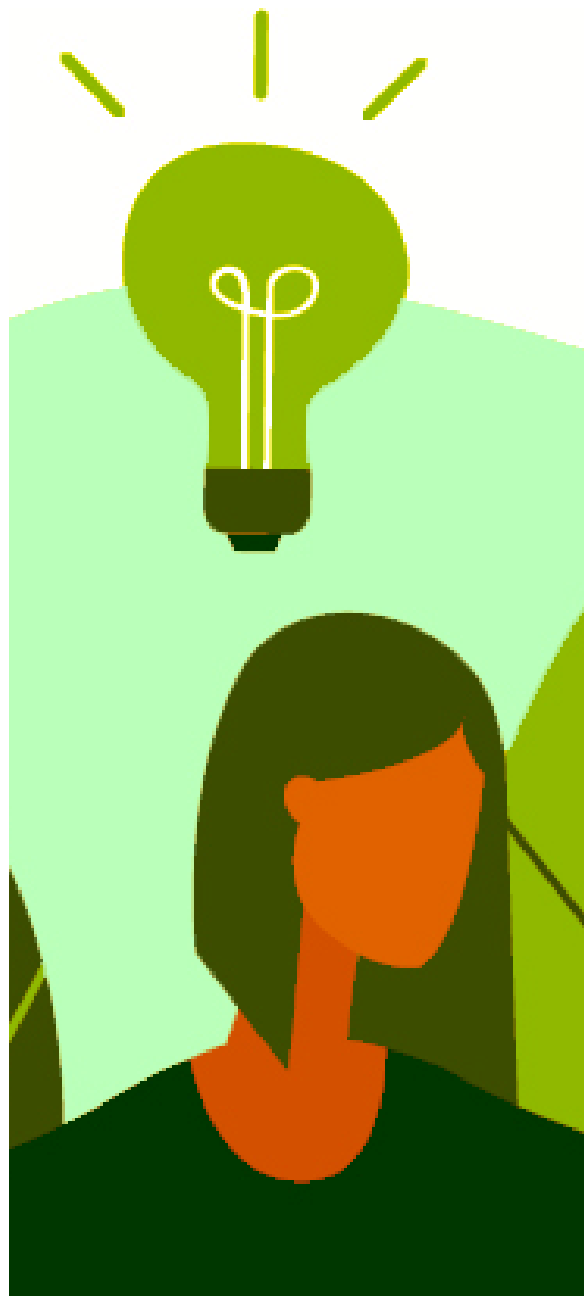
The ability to intervene and provide basic psychological counseling to individuals and the group.

➤ **Seventh:**

The ability to manage cases, and to organize referrals to the relevant institutions according to the professional foundations the institution follows, or according to the standards of international organizations.

➤ **Eighth:**

Shall has sufficient information about psychological problems and the effects resulting



therefrom, and to deal with it properly.

➤ **Ninth:**

It is preferable that he\she receive vocational training based on the basis and components of providing psychological support services.

METHODS-IN-USE FOR WORKING WITH SEXUAL VIOLENCE VICTIMS:

The National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women in Kurdistan Region 2012 - 2016, clarifies that ((the phenomenon of violence is one of the most important problems affecting the Iraqi society in general, and Kurdistan Region in particular. And such phenomenon arose to the surface in recent years in the result of the many compiled events that stormed the Iraqi society affecting all of its sects and components during the past decades. Furthermore; with the deterioration of the general situation, the condition of women has deteriorated from bad to worse, as is the case in times of conflicts and beyond, in addition to the deterioration of infrastructures and the consequent deterioration of basic



services for individuals, including health and other services, particularly with the absence of and/or weak laws and legislations to guarantee the rights of women in all stages of their lives, especially their security and protection from all forms of discrimination and violence.) and this is why workers in this field

are required to realize the size of the risks they face, because the mechanism of working with victims of sexual violence is the same one of the important areas that has become common in recent years, as it is considered as one of the important sectors that requires full attention in order to stop violence against women, and to work along the right paths to rehabilitate the women who are exposed to violence, and to reintegrate them into the society properly - it is also important to realize that sexual violence victims are one of the groups most affected by conflicts or by the traditional societies that still adhere to some customs and tra-

ditions causing psychological and physical harm to women - similar to the situation of the displaced women or those who are subjected to violence due to migration and displacement conditions.

Many specialists explain that people who suffer from mental disorders, especially women, may not find a special place to shelter to, since their psychological condition may cause them to lose the ability to focus and make the right decisions, which requires works to be done within the right context, or according to the principles indicated by international organizations, such as the World Health Organization



or the UNFPA, or other relevant organizations.

The International Red Cross (Manual of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support 2017) presents a set of important ideas regarding this topic, and shows that many of the following mental health disorder symptoms appear in those people, such as guilt, shame, severe stigma related to sexual violence, anxiety, suicidal tendencies, fear, panic, disorientation, anger and hesitation to speak about the sexual abuse they have witnessed.

The same Manual explains that there are some basic concepts that need to be taken into account when dealing with the victims of sexual violence, because they suffer from stress, effects of psychological trauma and psychological pressure, with the lack of adequate social\family counseling and the lack of support, as well as difficulty in facing societies during the absence of family support.

The aforementioned UNRWA's Guideline also indicates that it is imperative (to ensure



that human rights are an integral part of designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating mental health and psychosocial programs, especially for people whose protection is identified to be under threat). That's to say, activists and social support workers dealing with sexual violence victims, shall pay attention to the need to enhance the provision of services to all in a comprehensive and non-discriminatory manner, and to avoid the institutional care that can be dispensed for people with mental disorders, and to respect the freedom of thought, conscience and religion in providing mental health and psychosocial services.

Activists are also required to be familiarized with international resolutions regarding the prevention of violence against women, since Article Two of the Declaration on (The Elimination of Violence Against Women of 1993) states that: Violence against women is understood to include, but not limited to, the following:



A Physical, sexual and psychological violence within family, including beating and sexual abuse against family's female children, dowry-related violence, wife rape, female circumcision and other harmful traditional practices against women, as well as non-marital violence and exploitation-related violence.

B Physical, sexual and psychological violence that occurs within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, intimidation in the workplace, educational institutions and elsewhere, and trafficking in women and forcing them into prostitution.

C Physical, sexual and psychological violence committed or condoned by the state, wherever it occurs.



The Article 3 clarifies that: Women shall, equal to men, have the right to enjoy all fundamental human rights and freedoms, and to protect such rights and freedoms, in the political, economic, social, cultural and civil fields, or in any other field.

Examples to such rights:

A

The right to live

B

The right for equality

C

The right for freedom and personal security.

D

The right for equal enjoyment of the protection by the law

E

The right of not to be exposed to any form of discrimination.

F

The right to the highest possible standards of physical health.

G

The right to fair and favorable conditions of work.

H

The right to be safe from torture or cruelty, inhuman or profes-

sional treatment or punishment). No doubt, informing activists and those who work with the victims of violence about such resolutions will be a helpful factor in understanding the situations that may arise from violence and the existing methods to guide women to develop their capabilities for confrontation.



STEPS TO WORK WITH VIOLENCE-EXPOSED WOMEN:

Steps taken by any given organization may differ from others, or any specialized institution with a participant, civil activist or social worker, in providing services for women exposed to violence, but in the end, such steps must include the following, even if its implementation differed:

» First:

Determine the type of violence, as it is known that there are several types of violence, including (sexual, physical, psychological or material) and the dealing mechanism shall be determined according to the type of violence.



» Second:

The opportunity to confront violence by the victim herself, and her ability to confront violence after being rehabilitated and capacity developed.

➤ **Third:**

Diagnosing the effects resulting from women's exposure to violence, its results and what is required to do.

➤ **Fourth:**

Knowledge regarding the enacted laws regarding gender-based violence in the country.

➤ **Fifth:**

Realizing the mechanisms, bases and levels of safety when reporting on sexual violence crimes.

➤ **Sixth:**

Knowing the correct methods to collect evidences and the mechanisms for providing medical care in an appropriate manner for victims.

➤ **Seventh:**

Identifying the obstacles that prevent sexual violence victims from obtaining appropriate services in the relevant institutions or the existing institutions in the local community.

➤ **Eighth:**

Shall enjoy a level of competence and ability to work in identifying cases of sexual and gender-based violence.

➤ **Ninth:**

The ability to communicate with competent institutions and courts specialized in cases of sexual violence.



RESPONDING TO PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT CASES:



Many institutions operating in the field of responding to cases related to securing psychosocial support services, agree on the need for those who perform such services to understand the principles on which they rely on, and through which the image clears, and the correct method clarified, so that the response process can be effective and the goal is achieved, by taking the following into consideration:

- ▶ Activists shall contribute in providing services and guidance in a manner that respects human dignity and includes respect for



the situation of victims or targeted groups.

- Their ability to provide opportunities for learning, guidance, counseling and awareness through their efforts to learn positive adaptation of victims, parents, or those interested in the family or the concerned community.
- Ease of access to services, institutions and organizations that provide services in the event that the victims are exposed to financial or family distress threatening their stability, and affect their psychological status.
- The ability to get access to spe-

cialized services in the event they faced difficulties and challenges hindering the victims who are exposed to violence, and when they are, as activists, unable to deal with it.

As stated in the Psychosocial Health Guideline of the Red Cross, which was previously mentioned, there are several forms of ((responses in the field of mental health and psychosocial support, through: organizing psychosocial support groups that focuses on the (exchange of experiences and information and developing life skills of victims with regard to implementing awareness-raising activities that help the local community to confront violence and its causes)).

Additionally, among the forms of response in the field of mental health and psychosocial support: the implementation of individual activities directed to women during family visitsz

When activists provide individual counseling through enhancing means of communication, education, awareness for

members of the local community about mental and physical health issues and its effects, and raising family members' awareness about severe cases to increase their understanding and awareness about the consequences of mental and psychosocial disorders associated with violence,

and therefore; it is preferred for activists to notify primary health care staff and workers in the health care community about the status of the victims who are suffering from severe mental disorders, or require continuous care, if the targeted group suffers from mental health disorder for example, or has a disease that requires intensive care.



MECHANISMS OF PROVIDING SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES:

Many organizations offer different programs to support groups in need for social support, and such activities vary between family visits, communication activities and the implementation of various activities to spread awareness about the effects of sexual violence or the importance of following the appropriate bases by the main actors, especially those who are trusted by the victims and their families to provide psychosocial support and referral to mental health professionals when necessary, in accordance with sound contexts that do not cause harm, or are a reason for the lack of communication from activists.

The mechanisms for providing guidance, counseling and aware-



ness vary according to the groups that are dealt with, whereas helping people with physical disabilities to adhere to treatment requires high skill, because in many cases these people resist treatment (for various reasons), and therefore; helping them understand the different aspects of their treatment improves their commitment with treatment. This approach or method is the same when dealing with people with physical disabilities for example, or those who have symptoms of depression, as it requires preparing and

guiding them in a way that helps them to accept learning how to manage their affairs despite their disability. In this regard, the focus of social support program shall not be neglected in social reintegration and educating family members on this matter and providing them with the correct information to achieve a stable and a safe environment that helps the victims to benefit from.

And; in order for the services and work programs of organizations that rely on local community activists to be organized and to be based on a systematic plan, they should apply the following points:

► **First:**

Special visiting teams for visiting families and groups that require psychological and social guidance and health awareness.

► **Second:**

Discussion and focus group management teams must be trained and familiar with the rules of conduct and the imple-

mentation of participatory discussion sessions.

► **Third:**

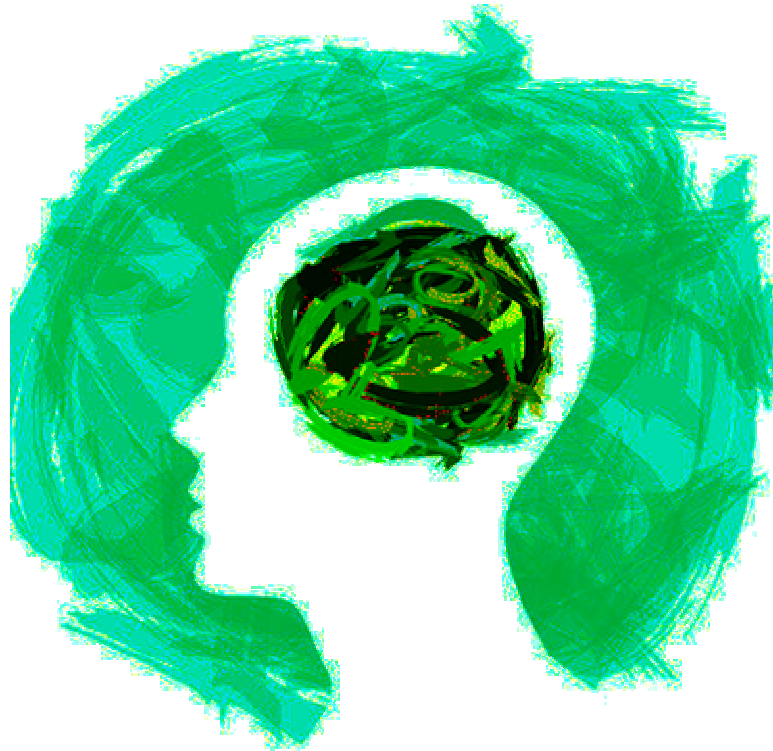
It is preferable to have activists with the ability to carry out artistic activities or yoga exercises for example, because in many cases recreational exercises are considered as a helpful factor to adapt victims with support and treatment steps.

► **Fourth:**

Social guidance and counseling teams shall include activists from the local community to learn the privacy aspects of the community as well as its culture and mechanisms of dealing, to avoid mistakes resulting from affiliations or due to the form of identity and social status.



In order for members of the abovementioned teams, especially civilian field activists, to implement such activities, and to carry out their tasks in an optimal way, they are required to possess the following skills that were mentioned in the Training Manual on Implementing Social Cohesion Initiatives in Post-Conflict Societies - Khidher Domle 2019:



- Tolerance in embarrassing moments that may appear from children, women or people with special needs.
- Have a sense of humor and the ability to communicate continuously.
- Identifying things that provoke the groups that are dealt with when moving away from home.
- The ability to organize, manage and employ time according to the need of the targeted groups that are scheduled in the weekly or monthly working plan.
- Having the skill to conduct,

apply and practice exercises. The more the exercises are performed and practiced in front of the participated women or children, the greater their interest increases in what you offer to them.

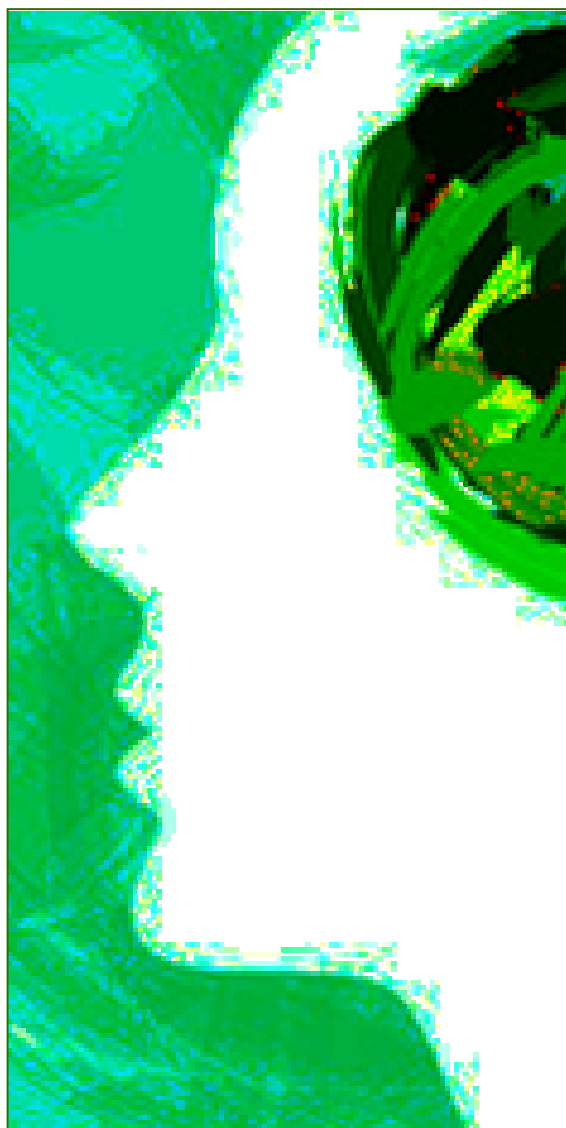
➤ The skills to build trust and dialogue, and to communicate quickly and smoothly.

➤ Realize and understand the conditions involving the implementation of events, support steps and training women outside home.

➤ Shall has a wide knowledge in respect to the laws and legislations related to violence cases, and the mechanisms of communication with the relevant institutions that provide protection and shelter.

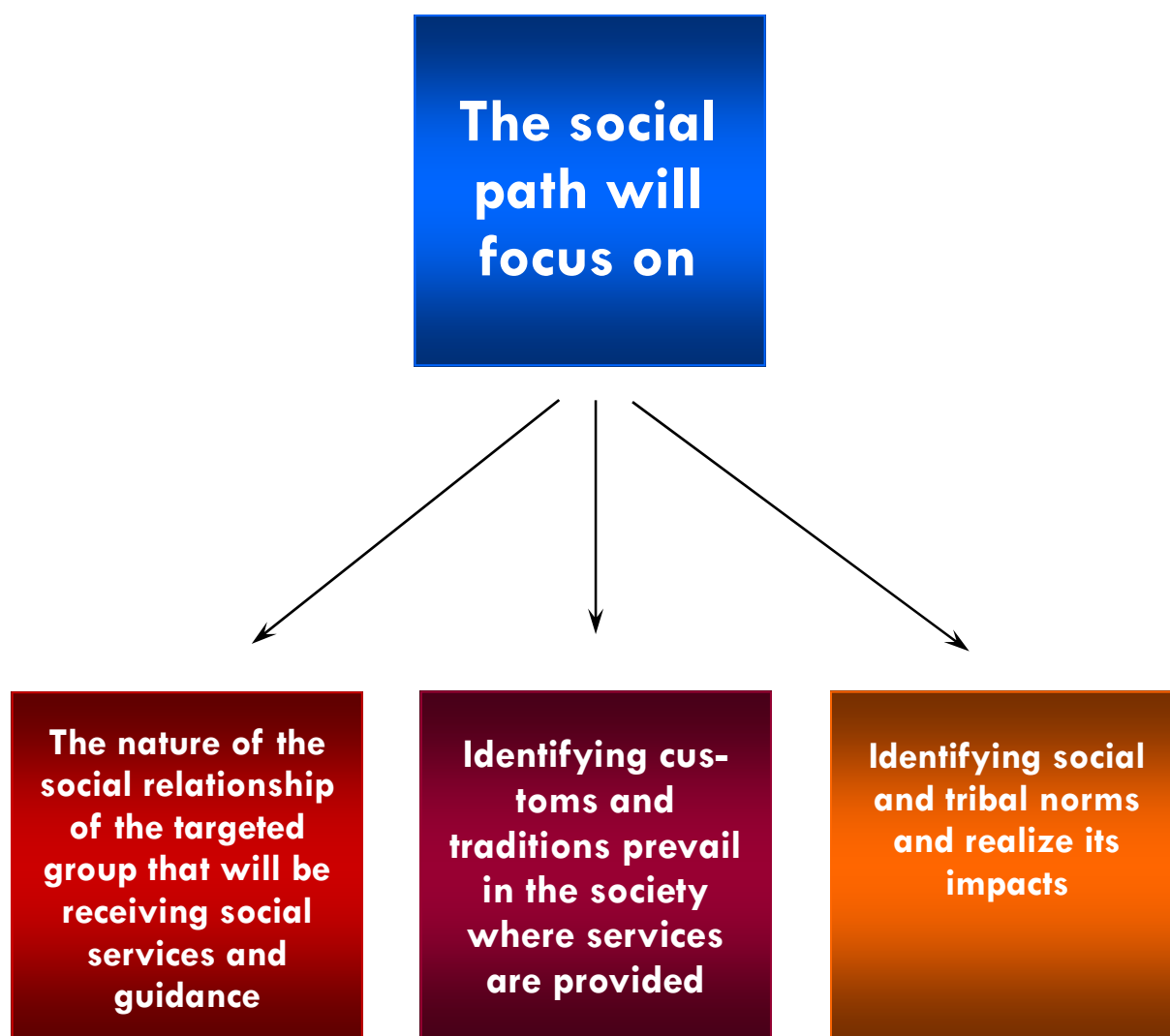
➤ Shall have the skill to identify development and changing that happens in the beneficial groups that receive psychological and social support programs.

➤ The ability to make initiatives



that suit the reality of the targeted groups and the environment in which they were raised.

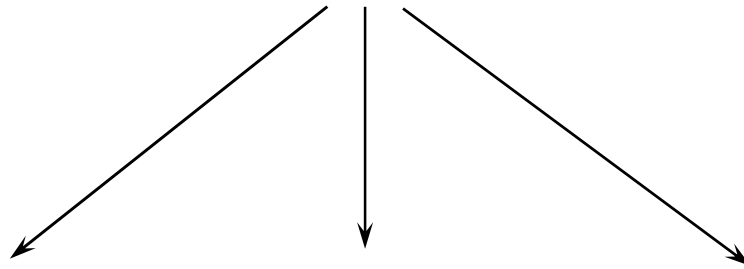
➤ See the chart below to know the focus mechanism on the social path and its components, since activists must adhere to some leaders and mechanisms of work to achieve trust and positive impact.



The process of adhering to such paths is based on the experience and skill of the activists or those who provide psychological and social support services according to the paths outlined above, with great attention to realize and identify the most influential aspect - in light of which to determine the mechanism of dealing and communicating with the beneficiaries. And; in order for the process of

providing guidance, support and service to be completed correctly, there must be another aspect accompanying the provision of social services, which is legal guidance and consultancy, whereas victims need to know legal tracks in the event they have been subjected to domestic \ physical violence, sexual assaults or exploitation and etc... which requires work to be executed according to the following chart:

Legal services and consultancy path:



Linking the violation or abuse with human rights

Identifying the nature of violations according to the laws relevant to the violence

Explain and determine the laws relevant to the protection and mechanism of working accordingly

BASES AND SKILLS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT:

Specialized organizations recommend that a set of practical skills must be available by those providing services in the field of psychosocial support - we present below a set of necessary principles provided by - IASC - 2011 in the Mental Health Manual. What humanitarian health aid providers should know?

Focusing on the following:

➤ **First:** The person providing social support skills shall hold an advanced degree in the field of public health or nursing, or a certificate from one of the branches of behavioral and social sciences.

➤ **Second:** Shall enjoy field experience in managing programs to implement social support activities and work during humanitarian events.



➤ **Third:** Shall has a good knowledge of the various practical, field and cultural trends and practices to implement social support programs.

➤ **Fourth:** Has field experience in humanitarian work and the ability to work with marginalized and vulnerable groups, and with communities affected by conflict.

➤ **Fifth:** Has good experience and knowledge in working to respond to emergency situations in order to support groups in need for psychological and social support, and to communicate with institutions, agencies, non-governmental organizations and relevant UN organizations.

➤ **Sixth:** Working away from being affected by affiliation with taking into account the cultural sensitivity of the groups that receive social support services and their societies.

➤ **Seventh:** The skill to provide basic first aids in the field, along

with social support services and consultancy.

➤ **Eighth:** The ability to realize dangerous situations and direct individuals from the local community to deal with it, or refer it to the relevant authorities.

See the chart below to find the map of providing social support services according to the organized sequence, as it will help to establish and employ capabilities properly, and to create trust among the targeted groups enhancing communication between both parties from one hand, and with the local community on the other hand, whereas the proper way to provide social support services comes with effective results and helps to achieve more societal stability.





Providing psychosocial support services and guiding vulnerable groups to get access to health services is based on several tracks that require those who are working in such areas, especially by activists, to know and to work in parallel, or according to what teams of international organizations adopt, as described below:

- **First:** Realizing the basic services of the society of the targeted groups in providing social support, because knowing the social services and the special assistance in providing shelter and health care helps activists to instruct individuals on the mechanisms of work correctly.
- **Second:** Knowing the level of societal and family support provided by adults to support children, women or groups with special needs, given that crises and wars cause disruption of social structures, and family support becomes very limited despite the groups' knowledge of its importance.
- **Third:** The ability to provide specialized support through intervention to provide necessary support to women, especially those who need more focused individual response and care by trained staffs or social workers who have knowledge about the conditions in which social support programs are implemented.
- **Fourth:** Ensuring the provision of qualifications and knowledge that help the community to support the decision of referral, follow-up and evaluation, and to enhance the capabilities of the victims or the beneficiaries of social and psychological support services in an optimal way.
- **Fifth:** Ensuring sustainability through providing knowledge and skills to members of the local community or working with them, to achieve more support and assistance to social support programs.



TRACKS OF PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES:

Those in charge of providing services, guidance and implementation of social support programs are required to have knowledge about implementing and designing meetings management and making field visits or training and social counseling

when holding the sessions - social support sessions that are the most prominent links and contributions of activists to provide and secure social support services for different groups, especially women exposed to violence.



MANAGING GROUP SESSIONS FOR SOCIAL SUPPORT:

The management of group sessions for providing guidance, consultancy and social support does not differ from other sessions which are called “Focus Groups” in many aspects, as it is preferable to be well prepared and to choose appropriate place for, and the subject shall be

specified in advance.

Social support sessions are characterized by paving the way for participants to interact or communicate quickly and easily, and also creating a safe environment for participants to exchange information.

Some specialists specify that



the number of participants in the social support session should not exceed twelve persons, while others specify that the best number is between 8 - 12 persons, from a social environment close to each other, and preferably a common point shall exist amongst them, in respect to age, cultural level, gender or the society they belong to, which is the closest factor.

Social Support: is the work and guidance that a provider of social services and social counseling does by employing feelings and tenderness, and provid-

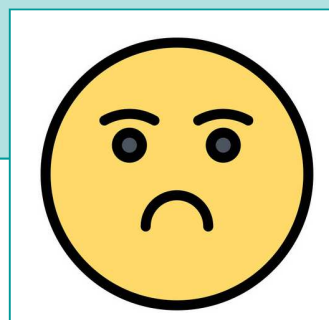
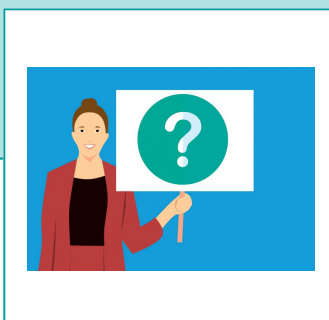
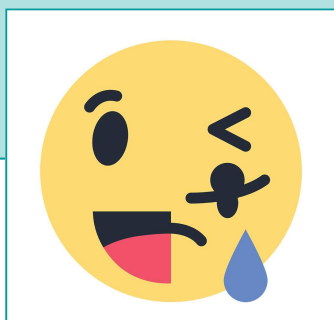


ing advice through a personal companionship method.

Social support includes directing family members to those targeted for the development of social relationships and directing individuals to the proper use of health, psychological and medical guidelines.

It is important for the social services providers or social workers to take into consideration some questions before undertaking any case:

- How do you feel?
- How does he behave with others during the session?
- How he addresses questions and observes others?
- How does he communicate with others - Are there any signs of social isolation?
- Does he have friends - relatives to whom he tells how he feels?
- How does he sit before the instructor?



Hence; it is important to know that social isolation deteriorates the situation of the targeted person, and gradually turns into a mental illness if he does not present his condition to the relevant stakeholders, which means referral according to the contexts in order to be able to obtain health services correctly.

Therefore, the activist, the counselor or the social service provider plays a major role by diagnosing the case and directing the targeted person properly, in order to eliminate the effects of social isolation and make the individual restore an active status in the society and within the family.

In its publication (The Guide to Recreational Activities for Psychosocial Support - 2016), the UNRWA Organization provides a set of goals that can be achieved by holding social support sessions, and we are hereby offering the same with additional modifications in order to show its significance, and the activists of both genders, especially the women, shall know

that there will be always such goals before them, until the goal is achieved from hold social support sessions properly.

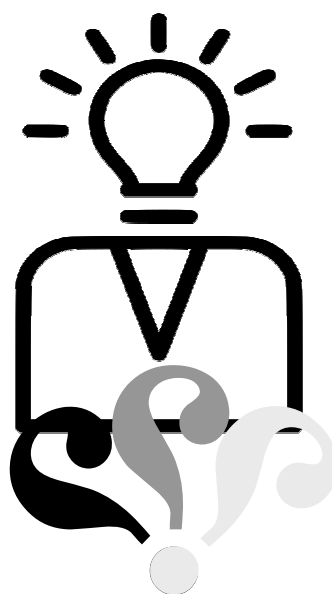
➤ Confirm that participants are active and enjoyed the session.

➤ A successful session helps to provide comfort and relaxation to the participants.

➤ A successful interactive session helps the participants express their feelings.

➤ Organizing and implementing active sessions help to learn the skills of focus and correctly express their imaginations.

➤ Organizing an effective group session provides the opportunity to establish communication among the participants.



And; in order to achieve these goals, the activists who hold social support sessions must follow a set of steps for the work of social workers and activists, as follows:

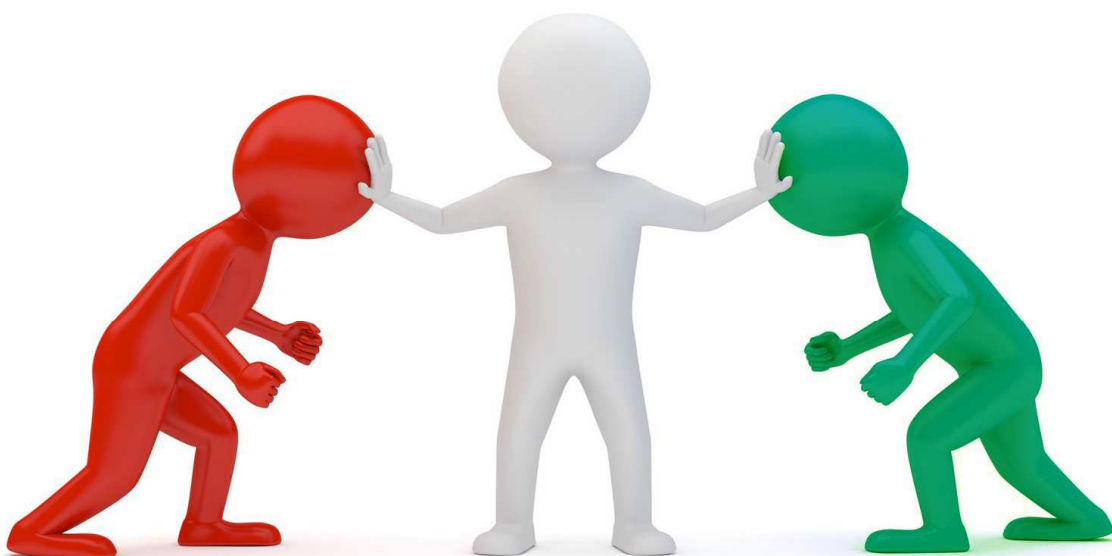
- **First:** Personal introducing of researcher and the social counselor, with explaining the objectives of the social counseling and guidance briefly and clarify why is it so important to work on it.
- **Second:** Attempts to get introduced to the group personally and understand their perceptions about the meeting, in order to provide social guidance accordingly. And; through introducing to the group, it is possible to sort out the most prominent points that will be highlighted.
- **Third:** Striving to provide ideas about some of the cases that were presented previously, in order to take its place in the discussion and through which ideas and remedies can be produced for each case, or to ask the participants to submit or choose a case to discuss.
- **Fourth:** Diversity in managing the discussion and the ability to speak and listen well so that the targeted audience notices the importance of communication and its necessity, so as to continue following the discussion on the same topic.
- **Fifth:** Communication with the targeted group in order to understand and identify the challenges they face in their social life - in the form of groups - or personally by identifying it if the session was sole.
- **Sixth:** Try to encourage the participants think about solutions and make proposals for a solution if the session is collective, and encourage them to think about opportunities for a solution if the session was sole.

- **Seventh:** Providing examples and models that the researcher and the social counselor have come across, as part of the process of benefiting from past experiences they have witnessed.
- **Eighth:** Confirming from time to time that the privacy of all the talks that are said and discussed will be preserved, and that all secrets will be confidential.
- **Ninth:** Steps to Encourage Dialogue: it will be achieved through individual dialogue, and the targeted individual will be encouraged to speak and help to focus on the discussion, so that he can offload emotional senses and express what he suffer from.
- **Tenth:** Trying from time to time to take notes and refer to it, whether the session was individual or collective.
- **Eleventh:** Emphasizing on performing various types of exercises, starting with simple exercises that help to movement and activation, and ending with exercises that help to focus and move easily and flexibly - relaxation exercises - deep breathing - exercises to enhance cohesion and communication among the targets.
- **Twelfth:** Emphasis on building trust with the targeted audience through interesting conversation, funny talks and the application of some ideas that direct them, whether the case was an individual or collective.
- **Thirteenth:** Tempting the participants in the collective sessions to think about finding solutions to the problems of their colleagues, or to ask important questions, such as: What would you do if you were in your friend's situation?

SERVICE AND SOCIAL SUPPORT PROVIDER \ SOCIAL WORKER OR CIVIC ACTIVIST:

He is the person who meets practical\scientific and specialized conditions required to perform social services - and his primary task is to follow various social issues and provide assistance, support and psychological-social counseling to those who are in need, and further to help solving problems facing

people, whether it was a personal social problem or problems facing the public as a whole.



THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A SOCIAL WORKER:

The person in charge of implementing psychological and social support services and programs must have several basic characteristics through which his duty and tasks assigned to can be performed correctly, and such characteristics and its levels may differ and vary from one person to another, but ultimately; most of these characteristics shall exist in order to complete his image, performance and ability to achieve a positive impact in helping, guiding, and directing the groups to which social support are provided:

- Accuracy of notice and strong intuitive.
- The ability to exercise self-control.
- Understand the mental status



of the surrounding people and their challenges

- Systematic suspicion
- Wide imagination
- Follow mental and logical bases
- Enjoy tolerance and the ability to prepare reports and summarize ideas
- The ability to communicate and build trust with beneficiaries - targeted groups.
- The possibility of embracing psychological pressure that is initiated by the beneficiaries - the targeted groups

Accepting Others Organization (AOO)



Accepting Others Organization (AOO) is a non-governmental and not-for-profit organization, founded in May 2014 and works in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region to achieve human rights and ensure peaceful co-existence through promoting tolerance and collaboration between the diverse components of the society and supporting governmental and nongovernmental institutions in developing policies guaranteeing freedoms, rights and social justice in accordance with international standards.

Vision

A tolerant, democratic and diverse society that guarantees human rights and freedoms for all, promotes values of social justice, citizenship and non-violence and rejects extremism in all its forms.

Mission

AOO is a national NGO, aims to preserve the diversity of Iraq by building capacities of individuals and key stakeholders to resolve conflict and promote peace to ensure peaceful co-existence among communities of diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds and ensure that adequate policies are developed to ensure protection and participation of all community groups.

 **Values:**

We believe the way to create impactful and lasting change in communities is through developing young leaders who are committed to freedom, equality, and justice for all.

We believe in the same freedoms for all people, including freedom of movement, freedom from fear, freedom from violence and freedom from oppression.

We believe that people on all sides of conflict deserve self-determination and basic human rights.

We believe in our common humanity and the sacred value of each human life. We mourn each person lost due to violence and share the pain and suffering of their families.

We believe the future depends on the leadership of the next generation.

Empowering women and girls to find their voice and learn how to use it in a non-violent manner for the benefit of their societies.

Developing peacebuilding and leadership skills among Iraqi citizens and supporting ongoing leadership development.

Promoting intercultural exchange and education in our wider communities.

Adhering to all international conventions and agreements and considers them as the main source for its vision and work.

Upholding the rule of law as a concept that embraces human rights principles without any distinctions between all people or women and men.

 **Areas of Work:**

Dialogue with all Iraqi Components

Peacebuilding at all Levels

Protection and Promotion for Women and Girls

Fair Representation for All

Advocacy to promote and achieve human rights

Child Protection

Legal Assistance for Survivors of War and Conflict

Humanitarian Assistance

Livelihood Support for IDPs, Refugees and Host Community

Education opportunities for all, particularly young girls



Where We Work:

AOO is working in the following provinces of Iraq:

Erbil

Sulaimaniyah

Duhok

Kirkuk

Diyala

Ninewa

Baghdad



Source of Funding:

AOO is a non-governmental, non-profit organization and funds its activities and projects through the financial support from the following:

UN Agencies (UN Women)

European Union (MADAD-Trust Fund)

Euro-Med Feminist Initiative

The information and ideas that have been referred to can't be effective if they are not accompanied by constant knowledge regarding the mechanisms of dealing with groups that have been subjected to violence, rape, sexual abuse, or children who are known to be abused, or groups with special needs, and methods-in-use to help them get access to health services, especially if we confirmed that guidelines for awareness and guidance exist at all health centers, but; in all cases, it requires that there be someone who initiates awareness and guidance so that he\she from the targeted groups can get such services according to the plans of the institutions, or according to the demands of the society or within the state contexts.

Khidher Domle

Is a researcher, consultant and trainer in conflict resolution and peace-building, and he is also a trainer in media, women's issues, minorities, displaced and refugees' affairs. He is member of the Center for Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution at the University of Duhok - Director of the Independent Media Organization and a certified trainer in issues concerning countering violence and promoting social cohesion.

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