

Sisters with a Voice: Setting Up Self Help Groups Training Guide



**April, 2018
Harare, Zimbabwe**

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Introduction

Establishing Self Help Groups (SHG) for sex workers began in 2017 as an addition to the programme's community mobilization efforts. Sisters with a Voice is committed to supporting sex workers' greater empowerment and activism, and believes that health and well-being are most likely to improve when the sex worker community acts together to improve their work and life conditions. In many other countries, SHG are a means for small groups of sex workers to come together to work for mutual gain. In some cases, small SHG link up with each other to create networks and federations and larger associations.

As a first step, SHG were introduced in Haraare, both in the CBD and suburbs. A new type of Peer Educator, called an Empowerment Worker, was created. Empowerment Workers are responsible for gathering 10-12 interested members together into a SHG and facilitating sessions from the SHG Guidelines until the SHG feels strong enough to operate on its own. After approximately 6-12 months of mentoring a group, Empowerment Workers should move on and start up a new SHG. Empowerment Workers are supervised and managed by Outreach Workers.

It is important to emphasise from the beginning that SHG are meant to be by and for sex workers themselves. Although the programme offered Empowerment Workers to help "kick start" the process, SHGs depend on their members' collective efforts to succeed.

The **aim of the SHG programme** is to strengthen social support and mobilisation of sex workers, and provide a structured mechanism by which they can come together to identify shared priorities.

There is a 2-day training workshop for Empowerment Workers, which assumes that Empowerment Workers have been recruited from among existing Peer Educators. If this is not the case, then it may be useful to 1 or 2 days for basic Peer Educator training prior to discussing issues specific to SHG.

The aim of the training is to introduce the rationale and organization of SHGs, and provide Empowerment Workers an opportunity to become familiar with the *Self Help Group Guidelines*, including practicing several sessions. Training should be conducted by the Outreach Workers who will be responsible for supporting the Empowerment Workers.

Materials:

- Copies of *Self Help Group Guidelines* for each participant
- Flipchart paper and pens
- Blotak/ sticky stuff for putting up flipcharts
- Coloured paper, scissors, tape/glue (for Petals & Thorns session)

Sample Agenda for Self Help Group Training

Date	Time	Session title
Day 1	8:30 - 9:00	Welcome & Introductions Getting to know each other
	9:00 - 10:00	Rules & Expectations What are Self Help Groups? Why start Self Help Groups?
	10:00 - 10:30	Tea Break
	10:30 - 12:00	Brainstorming: Good facilitation skills 3 Steps to Setting up a Self Help Group Principles of Self Help Groups
	12:00 - 12:30	<i>Tool 1: Similarities and Differences</i> Discussion
	12:30 - 1:00	Empowerment Worker skills, knowledge & responsibilities
	1:00 - 2:00	Lunch
	2:00 - 3:00	<i>Tool 2: What is Sisterhood?</i> Discussion
	3:00 - 4:00	Managing Self Help Group meetings Monitoring progress
	4:00 - 4:30	Introduction to <i>Self Help Group Guidelines</i>
		DAY 2
Day 2	8:30 - 9:00	Recap of Day 1 and key points about Self Help Groups
	9:05 - 10:00	<i>Tool 3: Petals & Thorns</i> Discussion
	10:00 - 10:30	Tea Break
	10:30 - 12:00	<i>Tool 4: Conflict Management</i> Discussion
	12:00 - 1:00	Moving to action Working together to solve problems
	1:00 - 2:00	Lunch
	2:00 - 3:00	<i>Tool 5: Thinking about Emergencies</i> What is financial literacy? Discussion
	3:00 - 3:30	Next steps: Setting up the groups Questions & Clarifications Close & Travel

Sessions & Trainers' Notes

Welcome participants and introduce the training – choose an “ice breaker” activity and a way for everyone to introduce themselves to the group.

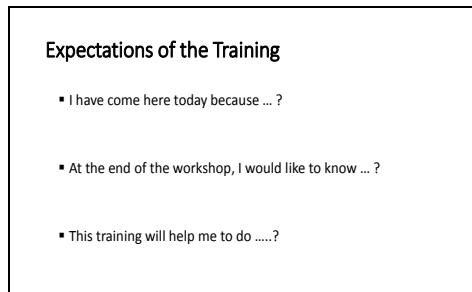
Presentation: Expectatons, Objectives & Ground Rules

Slide 1



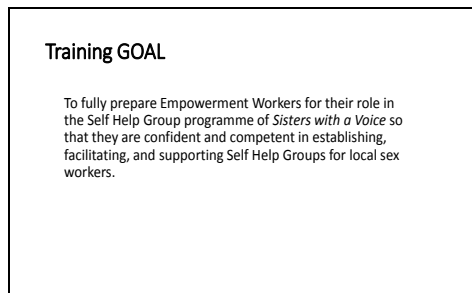
This training is a 2-day workshop to cover the skills and materials you will need as an Empowerment Worker to set up and support Self Help Groups.

Slide 2

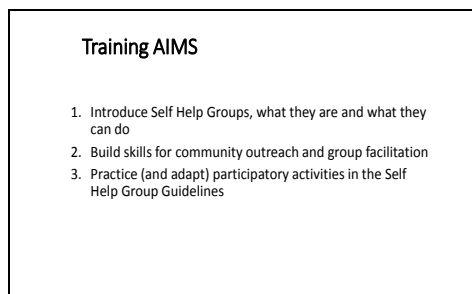


Ask participants to spend a few minutes reflecting on these 3 questions and then sharing their expectation of the training. You can write these down on a flipchart.

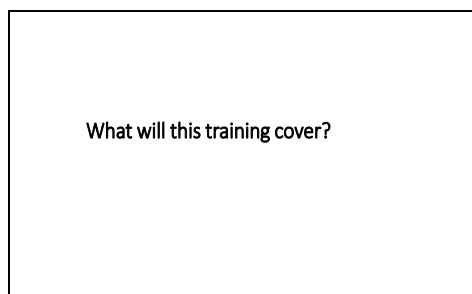
Slide 3



Slide 4



Slide 5



Slide 6

What are Self Help Groups?

- Why are Self Help Groups being set up?
- What do Empowerment Workers do?
- What will your responsibilities be as an Empowerment Worker?
- How will Sisters support you?

Slide 7

Self Help Group Guidelines

- You will receive a copy with suggested activities
- You will become familiar with its content
- We will show you how to facilitate the sessions and what their purpose is
- You will participate in 5 activities

After you present this slide, ask whether participants feel there are any expectations that won't be covered. Ensure all trainees have a realistic understanding of what they will learn in the 2-day workshop.

Slide 8

Setting Training Ground Rules

- Everyone should suggest 2 rules for us to follow during this training
- We WILL
- We WILL NOT

We will now set the rules that trainees agree to follow to ensure the workshop runs smoothly.

Prepare 2 flipchart papers, one for the positive rules (we WILL...) and one for the negative rules (we WILL NOT...).

Ask each participant to contribute one positive and one negative rule, and then put these up somewhere where they can be referred to throughout the training.

Slide 9

Setting Ground Rules for Self Help Groups


<p>We WILL...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Come to meetings on time ▪ Turn off our phones (or switch to "silent") during meetings ▪ Listen when others are speaking without interrupting ▪ Support each other ▪ Tell the group in advance if we cannot attend a meeting 	<p>We WILL NOT ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Miss meetings unless we are ill or away ▪ Come to sessions drunk ▪ Tell anyone's secrets outside this group ▪ Speak badly of one another ▪ Be disruptive during activities
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Now you can tell participants that they have just practiced one of the activities from the guidelines!

As Empowerment Workers, one of the first things they will be expected to do with a SHG is to set the Group Rules. Here are some examples, which might be similar to the training rules.

Presentation: What are Self Help Groups? Why should we start them?

Slide 1



SELF HELP GROUPS: INTRODUCTION & GUIDELINES

Slide 2

What are self help groups?


Ask participants to shout out ideas for what they think is a SHG and what it does.

Can they think of any examples?

Slide 3

What are self help groups? [examples]

- Youth groups
- Women's groups
- Church groups
- "Mukando" or other types of rounds



Did trainees mention any of these?

Do they think these are good examples of how small groups of people work together for benefit?

Can they think of any others now?

Slide 4

What are self help groups?

A Self Help Group is a formal association between a group of sex workers who voluntarily consent to pool together their strengths, knowledge, time, ideas and efforts to achieve goals they have identified and that each of them cannot achieve alone. Everyone benefits, and together they develop themselves and support each other in the long term by managing their own conduct, organising activities, and resolving internal conflicts.

Slide 5

What are self help groups?

A Self Help Group is a formal association between a group of sex workers who voluntarily consent to pool together their strengths, knowledge, time, ideas and efforts to achieve goals they have identified and that each of them cannot achieve alone. Everyone benefits, and together they develop themselves and support each other in the long term by managing their own conduct, organising activities, and resolving internal conflicts.

Slide 6



The Red Umbrella is an international symbol of sex workers activism for their human rights. There are many examples from around the world of sex workers creating their own groups and fighting for better work and life conditions.

Slide 7



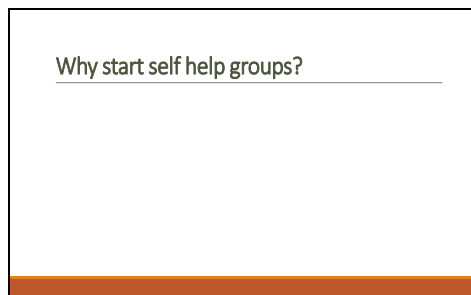
These are examples from India and South Africa

Slide 8



Cambodia

Slide 9



What are some ideas about why starting sex workers' SHG might be a good idea in Zimbabwe?

Slide 10



Initiate a discussion around these suggested benefits and risks – what do the Empowerment Workers think?

Brainstorming: What are good Group Facilitation Skills?

Materials: flipchart paper for each group; coloured pens; blutack/sticky stuff to put flipcharts up

Divide participants into small groups of 4-5 people. It is good to mix up participants throughout the training so individuals have an opportunity to meet and work with each other. So if you ask trainees to work with their neighbours this time, make sure you use a different methods for dividing into groups next time.

Give each group a piece of flipchart paper and some pens. Ask them to draw an Empowerment Worker in the centre of the page. Then, around the Empowerment Worker, they should draw (or write) the skills they feel she needs to be a effective in supporting SHG.

Once all the groups have presented, you may want to ask the following questions for discussion:

- How will working with SHG be different from current work (if they are already Peer Educators)?

- What is the difference between *facilitating* the SHG and *leading* it?
- How can they support SHG without dominating them?

Presentation: Facilitation, Setting Up and Principles of SHG

Slide 1

What is good FACILITATION?

This topic has just been addressed through a participatory small group exercise – the next slide summarises some of the key facilitation skills required.

Slide 2

What is good FACILITATION?

- Active listening
- Reading body language
- Encouraging shy participants to share their thoughts
- “Brainstorming”
- Guiding NOT Leading

An important point to emphasise here is that Empowerment Workers help establish SHG and support them until they are strong enough to function on their own. Empowerment Workers are not the *leader* of the Group.

Slide 3

3 Steps to Setting up Self Help Groups

- Step 1: People and Places
- Step 2: Participation and Process
- Step 3: Partnership and Power

Slide 4

Step 1

- Find 12-15 people who are interested
- Members should be willing to work together, but don't have to be good friends
- Where will you meet?
- How often will you meet?
- Encourage commitment to regular attendance and active participation

Groups will end up being different sizes, but you need a number of people that is large enough so the group can still function when some people are absent, but small enough so people can really engage with each other. Groups need to make these decisions for themselves – but at the beginning, it is recommended that Groups meet every 2 weeks. It is hard to sustain more frequent meetings, and less frequent may result in lost momentum.

Slide 5

Step 2

- Help the group set their own rules
- Emphasise the importance of *trust and confidentiality*
- Obtain a Self Help Group notebook
- Agree on activities for each meeting – the *Guidelines* can provide ideas

You can use the Self Help Group Guidelines to advise the new SHG about how to organize themselves, and what kinds of activities to start with.

Empowerment Workers should have a notebook for each SHG where attendance and minutes are recorded.

Slide 6

Step 3

- The aim of self help groups is to work towards *shared action*
- Help the group think about issues they want to address
- Start *small and realistic*

SHG need to think about issues they would like to tackle. The Group should not just be about talking, it should move toward action and working on shared projects. These can be very small at the beginning – if the Group is too ambitious, they may get frustrated and disappointed.

Slide 7

Self Help Group Principles

- Groups are *voluntary*
- Group *members* direct the group's activities
- What is discussed in a group should stay *within* the group
- Over time, groups become *independent*



These are some key ethica principles of a SHG and the Empowerment Worker should abide by them, and ensure group members do too.

Tool #1: Similarities and Differences


This activity is found on page 19 of the *Self Help Group Guidelines*. It is a short energising activity, that requires participants to move around the room (from Left to Right). You can use the statements suggested in the Guidelines, or create your own – but the aim is to demonstrate how different people will have some similarities and some differences with many other peers. Everyone is unique, so we all have differences among ourselves, but it is usually possible to find some common ground even with people we feel are extremely different to ourselves.

Use the reflection questions from the Guidelines to make key points about group dynamics, and the importance of working with Self Help Group members to emphasise their similarities while at the same time respecting each others' differences.

Remind participants that in future, they will be the ones facilitating these activities that we are practicing with SHG. They should ask questions if anything about the content or process is not clear.

Presentation: Empowerment Worker skills, knowledge and responsibilities


Slide 1

Empowerment Workers 

- Believe in sex workers' rights and their ability to change their own lives
- Want to build the capacity of others
- Are willing to guide others without dominating
- Respect the ideas and opinions of others
- Maintain confidentiality
- Are confident in expressing ideas

These are the expected attributes of an Empowerment Worker in the programme.

Slide 2

Empowerment Workers (2) 

- Recruit 10-20 Self Help Group Members (12-15 is best)
- Arrange meetings and remind members to attend
- Facilitate activities
- Ensure meeting minutes are taken
- Manage conflicts in the group and check rules are followed
- Keep expectations realistic
- Hand over leadership to the group over time

These are an Empowerment Workers' job responsibilities


Slide 3

Empowerment Workers (3) 

- Attend all group meetings on time
- Stay engaged in the process
- Encourage others to participate
- Remain friendly but firm
- Treat everyone equally and fairly

Empowerment Workers should adhere to these behaviours. They must be reliable and helpful, but not dominating

Slide 4

Empowerment Workers 

- What challenge do you expect?
- Which parts will be easy?
- What kind of support do you think you might need to be a good Empowerment Worker?

Divide into small groups again (different ones) and ask participants to discuss these questions. They should think about the local communities where they work and think about some of the context-specific challenges they may face, as well as what enabling factors there may already be (e.g. local sex workers are already active in the community; small mukando or other groups exist etc.)

Tool #2: What is Sisterhood?

Go to page 23 in the Self help Group Guidelines for instructions on this activity. There are 3 parts to this activity: an individual reflection, then brainstorming by the whole group, followed by the "Horse & Cart" drawing/diagram. *Divide participants into small groups for Part III (Horse & Cart).*

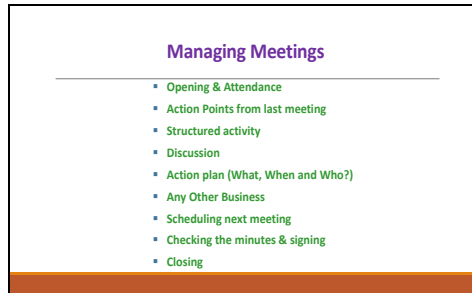
Going through each part with help participant understand how each builds on the previous one and leads to deeper understanding and discussion. This is also a good session to build peer support among the Empowerment Workers themselves.

You need up to an hour for the whole activity. As before, ensure you refer to the Discussion points to address ways that sex workers can try to “pull the horse forward” and/or “remove rocks from the cart” in order to improve their lives.

At the end of the activity, ask participants to reflect on how easy they think it would be to facilitate this activity with SHG members.

Presentation: Managing meetings and Monitoring progress

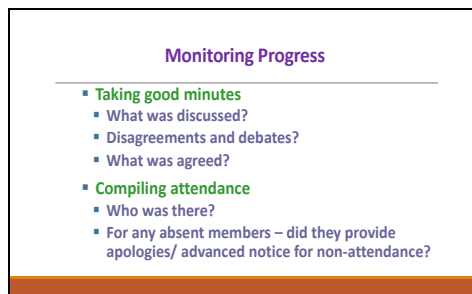
Slide 1



It’s good for SHG meetings to have a regular structure, and this is a typical agenda. There should be a formal opening and closing of the meeting. After the closing, members can stay and chat – but there should be a distinction between the business of the SHG and more social activities.

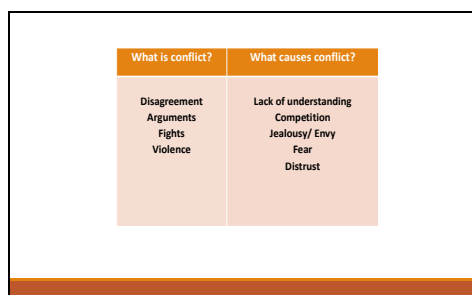
Documenting what was discussed and decided at each meeting is very important and holds members accountable. Taking attendance also makes it clear that regular participation is an expected part of being a SHG member.

Slide 2



The Empowerment Worker should take her own notes, even if the SHG nominates its own Secretary for taking minutes. Empowerment Workers will need to discuss progress and emerging challenges with their Outreach Worker supervisor, so they need to have their own record.

Slide 3



Managing SHG meetings will require managing interpersonal conflicts that come up. This is likely to be a big part of the work, and we will talk about this specifically during Day 2 of the workshop.

Given their experience with sex workers, what do Empowerment Workers think about the kinds of conflicts that will emerge in SHG?

Introducing the Self Help Group Guideines

At the end of Day 1, hand out copies f the *Self Help Group Guidelines* to each Empowerment Worker and go through the structure of the document so they can see what is included. Point out that some of the issues we covered today (facilitation skills, Empowerment Worker responsibilities, etc) are also listed in the Guidelines for easy reference. You can also show participants that they have

already themselves participated in Activity # 1, 2 & 4 and will have a chance to try out 3 more activities on Day 2. As a result, they are already more familiar with the Guidelines than they might think!

Provide time for participants to look through the Guidelines and read through the sections.

Tool #3: Petals and Thorns (Identifying Group Strengths & Weaknesses)

This is Activity 3 in the *Self help Group Guidelines*. It starts with an individual exercise and then for the petal & thorn part of the activity, divide trainees into small groups.

This activity is usually very popular, as participants enjoy using their creativity to produce the paper flowers. But it also serves a useful purpose in terms of think what each member of a group brings in terms of her strengths, and how every Self Help Group is a product of collective strength and talents. On the other hand, every group will also be *lacking* knowledge and/or skills, and they should be able to identify these as a group and think about how they might be able to obtain external assistance/ resources.

At the end of the activity, go around the room to acknowledge every individual's personal achievement. This is a nice energiser after the discussion, and gives everyone a boost to their self-esteem, and shows we all have something about which to be proud!

Tool #4: Conflict Management

This is one of the most difficult activities in the *Self help Group Guidelines* and is therefore very important to include in the training workshop. You can find instructions on page 38 (Activity 7) in the Guidelines. Conducting this activity itself can cause conflict as participants are reminded of previous arguments or disagreements.

Tell participants in advance that they need to really think about how they will conduct this activity when they are facilitating SHG. Conflict cannot be avoided and will almost certainly emerge in every SHG, so we need to find ways to deal with it constructively. This activity is one way to discuss it in advance, to try to prepare SHG members for when they start to argue or their group dynamics become difficult.

There are several parts to the activity. In Part I, after the participants have talked about what conflict is and what causes it, you can show the final slide from Day 1 again, which provides some ideas. This can then lead into the discussion about *preventing, managing and resolving conflicts*. As the participants to share as many personal examples as possible, as long as they feel comfortable doing so. It is much easier to identify methods for preventing, managing and resolving conflicts when discussing a realistic situation.

In Part III, the role play about 2 women with the a garden fence is a fun way to address a difficult topic. Depending on how many trainees there are in the workshop, you should divide into 2-3 groups and each group can create their own version of the play. Groups sometimes come up with quite different ways for the characters in the play to address the conflict!

At the end of the activity, ask participants how they felt to be part of this session. Did they find it useful? Do they feel they could use this activity themselves as a way to discuss conflict within SHG?

It is also important to note that not all SHG succeed – the experience of the Sisters programme has been that some groups dissolve over time. This is not the Empowerment Worker's fault – it is not possible for every group to be able to work effectively together. Each Empowerment Worker should do their best to support a SHG and reduce conflicts within it, but ultimately responsibility for the Group's effectiveness lies with the Group members themselves.

This activity will take at least 1 hour. The sample agenda provides 1.5 hours to ensure there is enough time to discuss how Empowerment Workers will conduct this activity in SHG.

Presentation: Moving to Action

Slide 1

Moving to Action

- Sharing experiences and problems is helpful but can start to be frustrating if there is nothing “done about it”
- Self-Help Groups need to start to *help* themselves
- The aim of the early activities is to build confidence and trust so the group can start to work together as a whole
- The first step is to *list and prioritise* shared problems
- But an important next step is think about *which* problems are realistic to solve

After a period of setting up a SHG, the members should move from the activities that build their trust and they should start turning outwards to tackle some of their shared concerns.

Sex workers will have many challenges in common, and some are easier to address than others.

Slide 2



Ask participants what they think this picture illustrates.

In English, there is the expression “low hanging fruit” that refers to the easiest problems to “grasp” and remove. It is easier to see short term success if you tackle the “low hanging fruit” before stretching out to try to get at the much more difficult problems!

Slide 3

Short term vs long term problems

<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Usually local□ Relies on the group members only□ Does not require a lot of resources□ Won't take too long to address	<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Bigger issues□ Requires external help□ Might need extra preparation□ Efforts will be needed for a longer time
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Slide 4

Working together

- Agreeing on priorities
- Resolving conflicts
- Building on each other's strengths
- Bringing in resources from outside the group
- Allocating tasks
- Delivering on time
- Checking progress regularly
- Learning from mistakes

SHG need to build up their capacity to act as a group – this means deciding what their shared priorities are and how they will move forward to make change. This can be difficult at first. Empowerment Workers should encourage a step-by-step process of group problem identification and solving.

Slide 5

What kinds of issues have sex worker groups worked on?

- Organising shared child care arrangements
- Setting up an “alert” system to help each other in case of emergency
- Fundraising for sex workers who have become sick and can't work
- Confronting unlawful arrests or police harassment
- Outreach to new sex workers in the local area

These are examples of what SHG have accomplished in other places.

Slide 6

Look at Activities 5 & 6 in the Guidelines

- Identifying Shared Problems
- Deciding if they are likely to be solvable in the short-term or long-term
- Scoring importance
- Choosing possible actions
- Assigning responsibility
- Tracking progress

Ask trainees to turn to pages 25-27 in the *Self Help Group Guidelines*. These 2 activities have been developed to help SHG identify problems, prioritise them, and decide which can be tackled in the short term and which should wait until they are stronger as a Group. They then need to decide on an Action Plan e.g. who will do what, when?

Slide 7

Why should SHG pick a "project"?

- Over time, members will get frustrated if SHG don't bring benefits – "all talk"
- Small changes boost confidence of members and increase commitment to the SHG
- Small changes can lead to tackling bigger issues
- Many successful activists started by working with their peers on local community problems

SHG that never move toward action are in danger of falling apart, because they won't really have any benefits for the members. So it is a very important objective of each SHG to work on trying to think of what they can do together that will make a difference to their lives and to their community.

Ask participants to turn to their neighbour and in pairs (or small groups of 3) to discuss what they think would be good issues for SHG action in their local communities. What kinds of challenges do they feel sex workers face in their place of work, and what might they want to do about it? Sharing ideas within the group of Empowerment Workers will help prepare them for making suggestions to SHG and facilitating discussions about the kinds of actions that can be realistically taken.

Tool #5: Preparing for Emergencies

This is Activity 9 on page 33. This is the only activity from the Personal Financial Management section of the Guidelines that will be practiced – and it is then followed by a few slides on what financial literacy is, and why it is important for SHG.

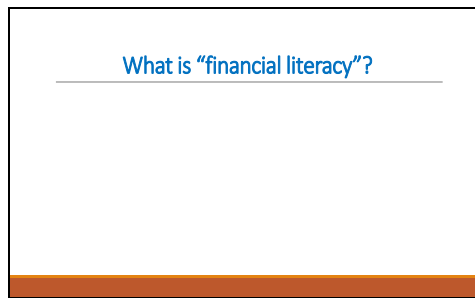
This activity focuses on how sex workers can try to prepare for emergency financial situations despite having very little money and low savings. The aim of the activity is to help sex workers improve their ability to cope when they experience an unexpected misfortune. Many people use the expression "saving for a rainy day" but how often do we apply this? Working with SHG to plan ahead for adversity can help them as individuals, but can also raise the possibility of group members helping one another in cases of emergency.

In this activity, participants think about the kinds of emergencies they might face, and how easy or difficult it is to deal with these. They then can brainstorm about different ways of having the resources to cope better.

This activity can be conducted as a whole group (if the number of trainees is not too large) or as small groups. Sharing examples and personal experiences and coping strategies is encouraged, as some participants may come up with creative ideas that the others haven't thought of.

Presentation: What is financial literacy?

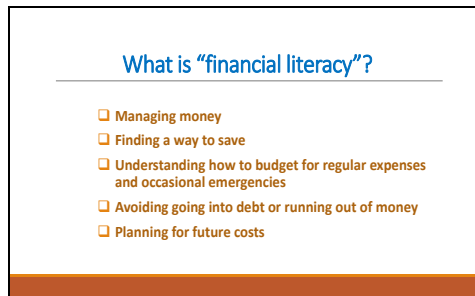
Slide 1



Ask for ideas about what this might mean.

Hint: Most people know what "literacy" refers to – so what might literacy about financial matters include?

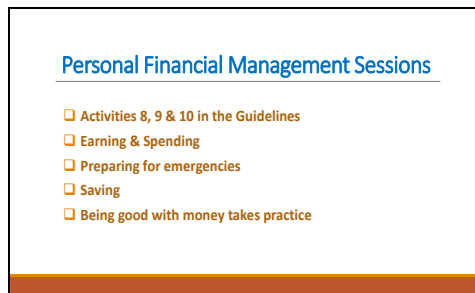
Slide 2



Just like learning to read and write, using money effectively is a skill that can be learned and practiced.

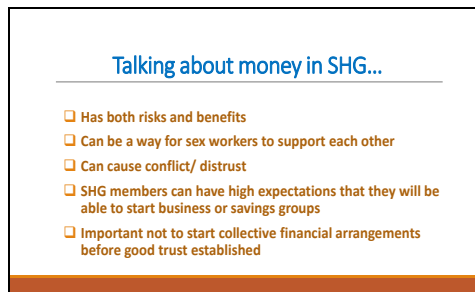
Managing money well can really help people have better control over their lives, even if they have very little money.

Slide 3



The SHG Guidelines cover some basics of financial management, and provide opportunities for the members to discuss together and learn from each other.

Slide 4



Sometimes SHG members want to immediately start up savings and loans schemes with each other or try to set up a joint business. While these are good ideas, and activities that SHG sometimes become successfully involved in, it is important not to "rush" into these kinds of arrangements. Money can be a source of serious conflict, so good trust between members should be established first.

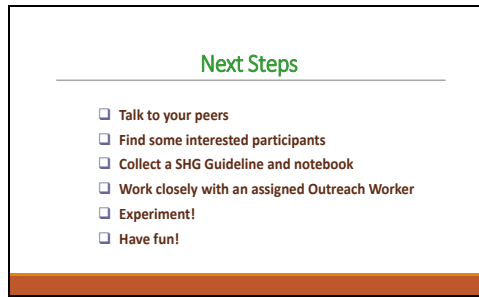
Have a brief discussion about Empowerment Workers' opinions about discussing money issues within a SHG.

Do you think financial literacy is good to include?

Will you be able to manage expectations?

What will you say if the SHG wants to start a mukando or a business together?

Slide 5



Next Steps

- Talk to your peers
- Find some interested participants
- Collect a SHG Guideline and notebook
- Work closely with an assigned Outreach Worker
- Experiment!
- Have fun!

So now participants have been through all the main topics of setting up and running SHG. They can think about how they are going to start out in their local communities.

There should be a final session where the trainers provide any information related to “next steps” – timeframes, logistical arrangements, expectations from Empowerment Workers etc.

Then allow time for questions and answers before wrapping up!