

Para Social Worker Training Manual & Curricula

Partnering to Strengthen the Capacity of
Community-based Caregivers to Support
Orphans and Vulnerable Children

A Project of the AIHA
Tanzania Social Work and OVC Support Initiative

Note: This training presentation is continually being evaluated and updated to reflect current needs and best practices therefore it should be viewed as work in progress.

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INTRODUCTION

About the Tanzania Para Social Work Program

The Tanzania Para Social Work Program represents a comprehensive workforce development model to strengthen the social welfare system in low-resource countries. The program was developed to equip caregivers and their supervisors with critical knowledge and skills that strengthen their ability to provide care and support to vulnerable children and their families, particularly in communities most affected by HIV/AIDS. The Para Social Work Program has already been successfully adapted and is being implemented in Ethiopia and Nigeria. The developers of this program are appreciative of the care and support of the funders without whom the program would not have been possible.

The year-long training program teaches basic social work and child development skills that empower community-based workers and volunteers by improving their ability to identify, assess, engage, and link those in need to existing care and support services. Program participants are equipped with initial professional skills and with access to professional training, supervision, and ongoing support. Care providers who complete the program comprise a workforce of Para Social Workers who are helping to bridge the gap between the extent of the need and the availability of trained social workers in Tanzania.

A companion program — the Tanzania Social Welfare Assistant Program — represents the next step on a career ladder to enhance the social support system. Para Social Workers or individuals with similar backgrounds may apply to complete a certificate program lasting one academic year to prepare them for employment in social welfare roles at the ward level. This program includes seven months of classroom work and two months of supervised field experience. It works best to link these two programs as has been done both in the Tanzania Para Social Work Program and in a similar program that has been adapted for use in Nigeria.

The intent of the curriculum is to introduce Para Social Workers to the basic concepts, processes, and helping skills that underlie all interventions with children and families, thus providing a foundation for effective intervention with this population. The Para Social Work Program gives community-based workers a basic knowledge of:

- Social work practice;
- Human behavior and development in the social environment, especially focusing on vulnerable children and families; and
- HIV disease including prevention, counseling and testing, treatment access and issues, and related familial, social, and community advocacy.

Children and families have diverse needs that correspondingly require assistance from individuals with a broad range of knowledge and skills, many of which are beyond the scope of this curriculum. Therefore, we believe that selected Para Social Workers who have successfully completed the program may further their education by engaging in the one-year Social Welfare Assistant Program or by obtaining university-based social work degrees, such as a two-year Diploma, a three-year Bachelor's Degree in Social Work, or a Master's Degree in Social Work. Again, it is important to stress that this short and intensive Para Social Work Training Course is designed to provide community workers with the first step toward those educational goals and to link these community-based practitioners in an organized system of care.

The emphasis of the program is on skills development. Therefore, theoretical and conceptual material is presented to support its application to working with children and families. Additionally, training methods employed emphasize active, practical skills development and experiential learning. Participants are given numerous opportunities to practice skills presented in the class setting to facilitate their transfer to real-life work with children and families. Participants in the Introduction to the Para Social Work course complete a workbook demonstrating their mastery of the skills included in the curriculum.

This Para Social Work Program includes three stages to achieve basic Para Social Work skills. Following a 9-day, 80-hour introductory workshop, Para Social Worker trainees complete six months of supervised fieldwork before participating in a subsequent 5-day, 40-hour training to review and enhance skills and competencies. It is important to note that the program is designed for cost-efficiency. Workshop days are between eight and nine hours long and very intense; often there is homework to complete before the next day. Given the cost of travel and related expenses, however, the model allows participants to complete the program within a two-week time span, obtain supervised experience in the field, and then come back to enhance their skills based on their experience to date.

The conceptual framework for the curriculum is based on the case management model and course content is organized around the following steps:

- Case identification;
- Engaging clients;
- Assessment;
- Developing and implementing a plan of services;
- Identifying service resources; and
- Monitoring and documenting services.

The material for each day includes a brief description of the module, the purpose of each activity, presentation materials, skills to be acquired, learning activities and exercises to allow participants to practice the skills, and guidelines for presenting the material. The manual includes a basic outline of each of these, but the full explication of the material requires scrutiny and use of the attached PowerPoint slide sets, which include complete content for presentations as well as some optional supplemental materials.

This program is integrated with an Introduction to Para Social Work Supervision program. Local governments select candidates for Para Social Work training along with designated supervision trainees, who receive an additional four days of training after the Para Social Work I Introductory course.

Target Audience

Individuals who are appropriate to participate in this training include all those who are working with orphans and vulnerable children and do not have professional social work training in intervention with children and families. Currently, individuals are nominated by their local government for participation in the program using the following criteria:

- Completion of Form 4 (4 years of high school);
- Experience in volunteering or working at community level;
- Between the ages of 18-35; and
- Proficient in reading and writing in KiSwahili.

This training may, however, be useful for members of various community groups dedicated to improving life for vulnerable children and families, including Most Vulnerable Children Committees, Community Justice Facilitators, Community Development Officers, employees of Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs), Community-based Organizations (CBOs), Faith-based Organizations (FBOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and others who are directly involved in providing care and support to orphans and vulnerable children.

Language of Instruction

In Tanzania, the training is conducted in KiSwahili; all participants have a basic level of fluency in spoken and written KiSwahili. While most of the participants have a basic mastery of English, we have found that participants are most comfortable and learn most effectively when instruction is given in their native language. At times when international presenters are present, translation services are provided.

Background¹

In 2007, a team of Tanzanian and American partners in social work education and training, funded by US government grants and with the support of the Twinning Center, American International Health Alliance, coalesced, including: the Jane Addams College of Social Work, the University of Illinois at Chicago and its Midwest AIDS Training and Education Center (MATEC), the Institute of Social Work (ISW) of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), Ministry of Health, Tanzania. The mission of the partnership was to develop a culturally competent para-social work model to create a sustainable, community-based work force while also strengthening connections of families and community workers to a national care system and to a national system of supervision, evaluation and educational development. The project is designated as The Social Work Partnership for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in Tanzania (Partnership). The project has three over-arching goals:

1. To develop a cadre of trained, organized and supported Para Social Workers who could be recruited, supported and supervised with great speed and who would then be further developed to meet the immediate needs of the growing number of families and children who are being caught in the crises of medical, economic and social displacement related to HIV/AIDS and poverty.
2. To build on, support and expand the vertically integrated national social service model for Tanzania that was already being developed to support orphans, vulnerable children and their families.
3. To develop a national workforce and the related educational structure required to develop, supervise and to provide policy and curricular resources to support this program. This resource was established at the Institute of Social Work, Dar es Salaam collaborating with the Department of Social Welfare at the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare to expand and strengthen the professional work force.

The strategy that the team focused on was to concentrate on the first goal, a national training program for Para Social Workers, to create a network of social service workers at the grass

¹ The initial development of the program is detailed in Linsk, N.L., Mabeyo, Z., Omari, L., Petras, D., Lubin, B., Abate, A., Steinitz, L., Kijage, T., & Mason, S. (2010). Para Social Work to Address Most Vulnerable Children in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Case Example in Tanzania. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 32, 990-997.

roots who would identify, support and link families in need in concert with the development of the National Plan of Action. Time was also an element in the process; after a satisfactory curriculum was designed, the first objective was to recruit and train about 400 people who fit the profile in terms of literacy, interest and community connection, and who could be trained within a year to provide grass roots support to vulnerable families and children.

The immediate programmatic goals further developed the partnership's natural capacity to recruit, develop and support trainers and trainees alike, during a program and beyond it so that a strong and robust network was identified, developed, supported, extended and folded into the national plan.

The program has been adapted for use in Nigeria and modified to work with psychosocial care workers in Ethiopia across the lifespan of persons affected by HIV.

Training Approach

The training methods² are based on adult learning theory (Knowles, 1973) including a mixture of lecture, discussion, brainstorming, group feedback, group case discussion, small group breakouts, use of a skills workbook and small group case discussions. The approach focuses on directly engaging participants through problem solving and case discussion as an alternative to the traditional lecture approach used in country to focus on skill development, rather than just informing participants about possible approaches.

Training of Trainer Approach.

The project leadership developed a *Training of Trainer* program (TOT). Participants are selected based on criteria including bachelor degrees or equivalent, experience working with orphans, most vulnerable children or in social work, willingness to commit to two trainings a year, as well as review of their resumes and an application detailing their reasons to be involved in the program. TOT participants work in government or Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with orphans and/or most vulnerable children and their families, or as a supervisor in the Social. While some trainers come from the para-social work pool, others are experienced program implementers, counselors or educators. The TOT includes a five-day workshop that teaches interactive learning methods, large and small group approaches, and reviews all learning activities, as well as reviewing the content overview, and a teach-back opportunity to practice the training curriculum with feedback. This is followed by a practicum where they participate directly in the training as participant/trainers, conducting portions of the training alongside a facilitator from the partner groups as co-trainers, including all group exercises. The training methods are further detailed in Chapter II.

Training Platform. This curriculum is designed as a training platform. Unlike a scripted, step by step curriculum, the platform is instead a strong topical outline supported by detailed visual material, both projected during the training as well as in a training manual distributed to participants. The platform approach is base from which the trainer could feel grounded in the concepts and procedures of the field but would also feel free to incorporate his/her own experiences and cultural perspectives. The content approach stressed best practices and current knowledge of the field on the international level while also aiming to be simple and clear and to translate from English to KiSwahili as congruently as possible. This approach was

² This section is adopted from Linsk, et al. (2010) referenced above and Twinning Center Nigeria Partnership (2011). *Training of Trainer Manual Learning to Train Para Social Workers, Nigerian Academic Partnership for Para Social Work.* Washington, DC: American International Health Alliance.

selected after initial pilot experience showed that trainers would want to simply read material to the learners with little opportunity for interaction or exchange.

The training also is designed for simplicity and the realities of conditions in the field. Given that power availability is limited the need for a written manual to supplement LCD projects is critical. Even the design of the PowerPoint slides reflected the conditions of the presentation; they are plain white backgrounds with black print to be viewable by the learning community in situations in which the light of the room or the electrical support might not always be optimal. Each trainee receives a manual, which contains each slide and room for notes as well as copies of tools exercises and some resource materials.

The curriculum is a guide and a learning platform, IT IS NOT A SCRIPT. It is designed to give trainers **training topics, concepts and content** in a manageable frame work which will be **informed by their particular personal and professional experience and expertise** as well as knowledge of the training audience, the interactions that occur between training partners (colleagues, trainers and facilitators who support the presentations), the interactions that occur between trainer and the training audience, as well as trainer knowledge of the personal, social, cultural and community contexts of the audience. The importance of the trainer's background as within social work and community work ensures that each trainer already possesses a significant level of work knowledge and practice from both academic and pragmatic perspectives.

Adult Education and training are very different from school based (at any level from primary school to university) learning situations. The basic principles of adult education are that the audience consists of adults who have a deeply engrained knowledge of their communities, a great deal of life experience and an urgent desire to help and assist orphans, children and vulnerable families in their communities who are threatened by poverty and disease. Trainer roles involve respecting and building skills . The most important method of accomplishing this end is to base all of the teaching on ACTIVE PROCESSES for the LEARNING COMMUNITY.

The knowledge of social work practice and education that trainers possess will then be transferred to the learning community by active engagement between the trainer and the community of learners. Thus, large group discussion, small group discussion, brainstorming, practical demonstrations and role play are the most effective teaching techniques. Our shorthand for this kind of teaching is that the content we are teaching is transmitted to their HEADS, their HEARTS and their BODIES.

HEADS – Ideas, facts, policies and procedures

HEARTS – Needs and active discussion of content

BODIES – Communication and practice as a Para Social Worker through role play and other active techniques, which will model para social work practice

The advice contained in this curriculum manual is based on experience and observation. But, there is no one way to teach this curriculum nor is there any right way. The authors of this manual have observed many people teaching these modules in three different countries and three different languages. The curriculum as a whole is successful and the process is challenging and fruitful for facilitators, trainers and trainees alike. It takes expertise and work and some innate talent to be a trainer in this program. However, it is also a clearly observable fact that there have been many very successful presentations (true to the content, true to the context and immediately apprehended by the audience) developed by novice trainers. These slides are a training platform because the experience and the capacity of the trainers should be

incorporated in and become an integral part of the process of presenting this material. Keys to success are knowing the material, how to present it interactively, and engaging the audience in fruitful, energetic and targeted discussions. In other words: teach the content faithfully and insightfully, integrate the knowledge into the value system of the learning community, and help them to incorporate it into their practice of Para Social Work.

Additional training information and techniques are included in Chapter II.

Structure of Training

1. Introduction to Para Social Work (9 days)

Most days have a major topic to be discussed and use multiple learning methods. For Para Social Work I: Introduction the topics are as follows:

Day 1: Introduction to and Identifying OVC

Day 2: Developmental, Legal and Ethical Issues

Day 3: Engaging OVC and their Families

Day 4: Assessing Needs and Strengths

Day 5: Developing and Implementing a Plan of Support, Working with Systems (Case Management)

Day 6: Counseling OVC and their Families

Day 7: Helping HIV Affected Children and Orphans

Day 8: Monitoring and Evaluation

Day 9: Supporting Families and Preparation for Community Entry as Para Social Workers

Most days also include Small Group Skills Development workshops are used to practice and demonstrate specific competencies. These workshops use a variety of techniques to ensure the participants have a chance to practice specific skills. These include:

- Use of role plays (all participants to develop a situation based on the topic in that day's training)
- Use of practice rehearsals to practice particular skills (such as open ended questions, validating feelings, etc.)
- Use of group process to share, model, support each other, etc.
- Participants demonstrate mastery by completing a workbook which is scored and evaluated by the trainers.

2. Supervising Para-Social Workers (4 additional days). Supervisors are nominated by local government representatives, complete the Introduction to Para Social Work and continue for an additional four days to learn the five elements of supervision of Para Social Workers.

3. Complete 6 months of supervised practice by a qualified supervisor

4. Complete a 5 day Para-Social Worker Part II training (includes additional day of supervision training).

5. Additional Para Social Work Updates, Monitoring and Evaluation Follow-up

Community Based Facilitated Training Model

The Para Social Work model uses community based trainers with some experience in training and in service delivery. The strength of the approach includes that the trainers come from community settings and are familiar with the issues, structures and values within those communities. They also bring some previous experience as workshop presenters or trainers but are not required to have formal educational backgrounds.

Facilitators. The key to making this approach work is to have *Facilitators* who serve both as trainer coordinators and as content experts for the training. The team of at least one facilitator with at least 3 trainers allows for training in large and small group formats for up to 50-60 participants per program. This allows four small groups to be facilitated by a trainer or facilitator. The Facilitators assume overall responsibility for all educational aspects of the Para Social Work Program as a whole and for each individual program being facilitated. They ensure the quality of the program, trouble shoot problems, support the trainers as role models and as resource people. They have in depth knowledge of the topics that are presented. Facilitators either have related academic background or have served as Para Social Work trainers for extensive periods and demonstrate their ability to assume this role. Toward that end the functions of the Facilitators include:

1. Assuring that the material presented conforms to best educational practice of the field and is also informed by best international practices relevant to the subject matter
2. Assuring that the material presented is organized, up to date, assessed and reassessed based on experience and reflects the community standards of the target audience.
3. Assuring that the personnel involved, Facilitators, Master Trainers, and Trainers, function as a team and that all members are prepared and mentored.
4. Assuring that assignments made are appropriate to the skill and the capacity of the presenters.
5. Assuring that trainers are prepared for each session in advance by daily mentoring and tutoring sessions.
6. Serving as a guide and authority for each session to help, support and guide both the trainer and the class discussion.
7. Assuring that the staff as a well coordinated team and that there is a fair and honest process for the assessment of trainer and program efficacy.
8. Debriefing all staff daily, so that the experience can be adjusted as necessary.
9. Assuring that the program is thoroughly assessed and that the results of each assessment are used as a basis of improvement for subsequent programs and products.

Trainers.

Trainers present the material assigned in the curriculum by the Facilitator with accuracy and depth of knowledge as informed by the knowledge of the presenter and in language and with examples that are appropriate to the participants of the community. They may moderate sessions, select learning activities, use interactive and experiential training methods, and assure that the basic competencies of social work practice by Para Social Workers is fully and completely explained so that the learning community can understand, accept and act on those competencies.

Trainers complete the Training of Trainer program and if selected continue to co-train with trained facilitators and experienced trainers before they take responsibility for specific training on their own. They are responsible to be informed about the background of the material to be

presented and to develop a community specific content for the material to be presented which is accurate and faithful to the material but which can also be understood by the diverse communities and language levels of students in the program. Trainers seek active support from facilitators, master trainers and trainer colleagues to assure the best possible learning experience for the trainees and the best possible teaching experience for the trainer and trainer colleagues. In addition the trainers serve as group facilitators, ensure that all participants are as engaged as possible in the training. . To direct the small group training sessions and accept responsibility for individual student completion of small group tasks, recording individual activity in workbooks and working with project staff to determine if students have mastered the specified skill competencies.

Trainers also participate in debriefing sessions with facilitators including reviewing the success of each day, obtaining and providing feedback and planning for the next day as well as engaging in related problem solving.

Introduction to Learning to Work with Orphans and Vulnerable Children:
A Workshop to Train Community Based Volunteers to Become Para Social Workers