



Group Development in Developing Countries

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Sincerity and responsibility go hand in hand and empathy follows. Individuals who are like-minded and devoted to the cause are the back-bone of groups involved in welfare activities. How to form a group and how to develop it?

To start with it is of utmost importance that the purpose is established. It may start with one person or a group of persons or as an offshoot of a bigger group, the basic principles remain the same. A vision that is shared strongly with focussed results is the crux of the issue. It is most important to identify the area of work and then to understand the nature of the work. A cause that involves compassion, love, sincerity, credibility can only be fulfilled by people who are involved in doing some good work.

For example let us begin with forming a group of parents of childhood cancer patients. We know parents can only wish the best for their children and can empathize very well with other parents. They feel the same pain, share the same trauma, experience similar difficulties and to top it all they want to do their best to reduce the agony and trauma related to the disease. The bond is sometimes so strong that even blood relatives and friends are left behind. Such a group can definitely alleviate and reduce the agony by sharing each other's experience.

Well sometimes, especially in the case of developing nations it has been observed that due to overbearing expenditure involved in the treatment, the inconveniences experienced due to distances, non-availability of specialists, poverty, illiteracy, superstitions, low confidence level and above all the fear of being singled out by society prevents parents to go ahead and form a group.

In India, people still want to hide the disease, they still live in a world where there is more faith in miracles than medicines, where parents are unaware and discontinue treatment due to numerous reasons. Here comes a group that comprises of social workers, siblings, survivors and of course some enterprising parents. In my kind of countries, the role of social workers who are compassionate, educated, aware and extremely genuine is like a pillar that supports the creeper.

These groups not only provide the much needed emotional and financial assistance but also provide a platform for the parents to interact and give them the confidence first to cope and then to help. Whether it is a parent group or a group of sensitive citizens the aim is to make it as useful as possible. A group can develop and function well if we keep these few points in mind.

The group activities must be:

(a) transparent, (b) result-orientated, (c) practical, (d) consistent, (e) interesting.

Some rules:

- Group responsibilities should be shared with each member allowed to function in his/her areas of choice.
- Regular meetings and maintenance of records are essential.
- To avoid stagnation, new areas of interest related to cause should be created. This could create more space for new volunteers.
- Let the group function under various subgroups to reduce friction and create harmony.
- Dinner meetings or similar gatherings of group members and their families strengthens the bond.
- Individual talents and resources to be tapped effectively.
- To enable the group to be more credible and consistent it is important to follow certain do's.
- Doctors associated with the disease to form an integral part of the group.
- Regular interactions with other welfare groups.
- Associating some local celebrities with the group.
- Involvement of local schools (children are the best type of volunteers).
- Stay away from politics as far as possible.
- Engage the press for all major activities.

Go international:

Experiences shared by people from different backgrounds is learning experience which cannot be substituted. Helps the group to develop tremendously.