

4.3 STAGES OF SOCIAL WORK GROUP FORMATION

There are a number of stages or phases in formation of a social work group. Ken Heap (1985) discussed these as group formation and planning; the first meetings; the working phase; use of activities and action; and the termination of the Group. According to Douglas (1979) there are five stages viz., conceptualisation, creation, operation, termination and evaluation. He has discussed these as the functions of leader while Toseland and Rivas (1984) discussed the stages under planning phase, beginning phase, middle phase and ending phase.

For our purpose we can discuss the stages of social group work practice under the following five heads:

- Pre-group (group formation) phase
- Initial (first meetings) phase
- Middle (Active working) phase
- Evaluation of the group
- Terminating/ending the group phase

In the pre-group phase worker identifies the need for organising a group and initiates steps to form the group. In the initial (first meetings) phase the worker and the group members meet at the place specified—agency or any other place where group is likely to have its sessions—and initial orientation to the group's purpose and other information is given and shared. In the middle (active working) phase the group continues its deliberations and activities to accomplish its goals and in evaluation phase the performance of the group is examined vis-à-vis the group purpose and members, goals. Finally, in the ending or termination phase the group is made to dissolve and the worker enables the members to part with each other on a goodwill note.

4.4 PHASE I: PLANNING AND FORMATION OF THE GROUP

The social group worker representing an agency providing services such as residential care, day-care and community work may come across situations where the services of the agency are effectively utilised by the client system through a group experience. The needs may even be identified by the other staff or client system itself. Once the worker identifies the need for formation of social work group, he/she starts planning for the formation of the group. For this the worker has to answer some questions with his/her professional background very carefully and systematically. These questions are:

Why is the group? Here, the worker has to look at the need for forming the group. The purpose and goals it can attain have to be conceptualised and defined.

For whom the group is being formed? Here, the task is to work out type of members the group addresses to. The eligibility criteria to enroll a member

How many? This looks at the number of members the group consists of. Should have large number or small number of members.

How long? This focus on the life span of the group in terms of time period and the number of sessions/meetings it shall have. The group exists for days, weeks, months and the frequency of its meetings.

How to ensure members' involvement in the group? The agreements the members and the worker enter into ensure the group processes to go on till the attainment of the purpose of the group.

Keeping in mind these questions the broad steps at this stage are:

- Formulating group's purpose
- Composition of the group

- Size of the group
- Enrolling the members
- Contracting

Formulating Group's Purpose: Here the worker has to be clear in his mind as to why the group is being conceived and what it is addressing itself to. The purpose has to be expressed in a well defined statement/s. It shall not be confusing and shall not give any scope for suspecting its genuineness as to group's broad aim of helping the potential needy members. Therefore, it shall be formulated in simple statements. It shall provide answers to the potential members as to what to expect and to what extent their participating in the group is beneficial. A well-defined statement of the purpose also takes care of unnecessary members to join the group. It also enables the agency that the formation of the group is within the confines of the agency's areas of operations and is not against its interests and services. It also enable the sponsors and other resource agencies what to expect from the group.

Let us see some examples of the statements of the purpose:

- Group is to create platform for the parents of the drug addicted college-going youth to share their problems and develop the skills to manage their wards.
- Group is to enable the women in the community to make productive use of their leisure time.
- Group is formed to chalk out tasks to be accomplished by the heads of the departments for the forthcoming financial year
- The purpose of the group may subject to some modifications to suit the changing demands during the course of the group meetings with the agreement of all the concerned parties to the group.

Composition of the Group: Once the group is established then the worker has to look into what shall be the composition of the group. Should it be homogeneous in its composition or heterogeneous? Homogeneity indicates sharing common features among the group members such as age, educational background, social class, and other interests. Homogeneity helps in building the group bond faster which is a decisive force in group process. At the same time, it fails to provide diverse information, experiences, and alternative ways of doing. Heterogeneity addresses to the need for diversity of certain characteristics of the members such as the length of time suffering with or coping with the problem, the efforts put into deal with the problem, the emotional state besides the other demographic attributes. Diversity ensures sharing of each other's situations, making comparisons, finding alternatives, and stimulates each other. At the same time it poses problems of acceptance and involvement. Therefore, it is an important task for the group worker to decide the composition of the group keeping in mind the broad purpose and the individual member needs and goals. Another aspect that has to be considered is whether to have an open group or a closed group. In open group there are no restrictions on joining the group from the point of the time. One can be enrolled into the group any time during the life of the group. While the closed group stops enrollment of members after the stipulated time of admission. Opting for open or closed group depends on the purpose, the goals and the time frame set for the group.

Size of the Group: How many members shall compose the group? What shall be the ideal size? What are the criteria to determine whether the size of the group is too big or

small? All these questions are there in the mind of the worker. There are no hard and fast rules to determine the size of the group. It basically depends on the purpose of the group and manageability from the point of time, space, funds and some form of controls that need to be introduced. Small size is easy to manage, more cohesive, provides higher levels of interaction but may not provide diverse experience, may not mobilise the required resources and the balance of the group is effected in case a member or two drops out. While the large size provides diverse experiences and even if some members drop out it will not adversely affect the group deliberations and achievement of group's purpose, can mobilise more resources, greater scope of leadership. But it limits time, all members may not find enough time to share their views, experiences, work, it gives scope to formation of subgroups and more conflicts. It is easier for some members to hide and avoid completing the tasks assigned. The professional experience and expertise of the group worker comes handy in determining the size of the group. Ideally a group of eight to fifteen members is a good size.

Enrolling the Members: Once it is decided to form the group and other modalities of the group viz., group's purpose, composition and the size of the group have worked out, then the next step is to enroll the group members. Here, the worker has to make arrangements to inform the potential members about forming the group. The information may be given directly to the potential members or passed through a notice in the agency's notice boards, a circular to the staff and other agencies concerned and by advertising in the media such as newspapers, radio, television etc., seeking applications from the interested members.

The prospective members may approach either directly or by sending in their applications. The worker has to examine the applications as to the suitability of the candidates on the basis of eligibility criteria established. The criteria include extent of need, urgency of intervention, demographic attributes, experience, and other skills. The worker can also arrange interviews with the applicants to ascertain their suitability. By interviewing the applicants the worker can also explain to them about purpose of the group and dispel some of their doubts about joining the group. Once the worker completes the screening, the suitable applicants are enrolled into the group.

Contracting: At the time of enrolling the members the worker and members have to enter into an agreement as to certain conditions that are to be followed during the course of group process. It consists of a statement of general responsibilities of the members and the worker during the life of the group. Some of these include assurance to attend the group sessions regularly and in time, to complete any task or work assigned, maintain the confidentiality of the discussions of the group, not to indulge in a behaviour that is detrimental to the well-being of the group. The contract also specifies the fees or charges if any for undertaking certain activities and for procuring any material, as well as the penalties or fines the member/s have to pay for any violations of the terms of contract. The contents in the contract are subjected to revisions to accommodate some unforeseen developments as the group process unfolds. The contract may be in written or an oral understanding. The contract binds the worker and members to planned schedules of the group and facilitate an environment to conduct the group processes effectively.

Finally the worker has to prepare a stage for beginning the group proceedings. He/She has to procure a conducive place for group sessions either in the agency itself or any other suitable place, arrange for monetary back up, gather necessary information and material. And make such other preparations for launching of the group.

4.5 PHASE II: INITIAL MEETINGS

In this section we are looking into what are the tasks the worker and members have to undertake to begin the group. In fact it is the most crucial stage as the success or failure of the group depends on how well the initial meetings are handled by the worker. The members attend the meeting with a lot of expectations. Member/s attend the meeting with the hope that time has come to get over the problem that has been affecting them over a (long) period of time. How much of it is going to be solved? They are also enthusiastic to meet and interact with others whom they have not met before and who are also having similar needs/problems. They will look forward to having new social experiences.

While on the other hand members many entertaining a number of doubts about the competence of the worker and whether participating in this group exercise can really deal with their problems effectively. They are also having a number of fears. They do not know what type of persons are the worker and other members. Is the worker and other members are of friendly disposition, understanding and sensitive and would not misuse the confidential self-disclosures the member/s likely to make in the group? Whether I can participate meaningfully in the group deliberations? Will my situation get more worsened? These are some of the fears of the member/s.

Similarly the worker too has his /her own thoughts. How much guidance the group expects from the worker to accomplish its purpose and goals? Whether the professional competence and experience is good enough to handle the group? Whether the members accept him/her? What type of new challenges and experiences the group brings ?

The Steps Involved in this Stage are:

- Self- presentations by the worker and the members
- Orientation about the group
- Goal formation
- Structuring the group session
- Reviewing the contract

Self-presentations: As soon as the group is convened for the first time, the worker takes the initiative of making the group members feel comfortable by friendly greetings with each and every member. Once the members are settled comfortably then the worker introduces himself/herself giving personal and professional details. The worker shall give adequate information about himself/herself as possible so that it not only makes members confident about the worker but it also act as guide as to the details of information they have to disclose when their self -presentations turn comes. After that the members are asked to introduce themselves. This exercise of introductions shall be planned in such a way that it will help the members to feel at ease, and come out with more details about their situation. The worker should make them understand that the more the details they give the better will be their understanding about each other and will make a way for developing trust which is very important for effective results. There are a number of ways of introductions. The worker can employ any of such introductions keeping in mind the group's purpose and composition of the group. One way is to sit in a circle and introductions start in either clockwise or anti-clockwise direction. Another way is the members are divided into pairs and each pair is asked to exchange information about each other and then one member of the pair introduces the other and vice versa.

Orientation about the Group: After the self-presentations the worker shall orient the members about the broad purpose of the group. Here the worker spells out circumstances that paved the way for forming the group. How their disadvantage/s are likely overcome through the participation in subsequent group processes. Members are told explained about the functions and the roles of both the worker and the members. The worker also mentions previous experiences if any, so that members develop confidence in the worker as well as the strategy of adopting group work as a viable alternative. Members are encouraged to seek clarifications as to the relevance of the group's purpose to their needs or problem situation. The worker also explains the agency's background.

Goal Formation: In this step, the goals of the group are framed. Goals are statements of desired levels of change in behaviour or in social situation or in physical conditions to be achieved at some future time. The purpose of the group, agency's purpose, the needs of the individual members and the modalities of conducting the group- – ThelenThelennorms of conduct –determine the goals. The worker assesses the individual needs of the members and in consultation with them frames the goals Toseland and Rivas (1984) specified three areas of goal formation. First area covers group centered goals that revolve around the conduct and maintenance of the group. Second area consists of common group goals that address to all concerned people – worker, members, agency, sponsor, and finally the third area is concerning individual member centered specific goals. The goals are again viewed as ultimate goal and a number of intermediary goals (Rose, 1973). The ultimate goal indicates what final change in the status quo is to be attained while the intermediary goals that facilitate attainment of ultimate goal. These intermediary goals are formulated session-wise and /or stage-wise that is from the reference of time or progress made. Konapka (1958) emphasises that while framing the goals, care shall be taken to see that these are complementing and supplementing rather than conflicting and contradicting each other

Some examples of the goals are:

- The parents of mentally retarded children join a group to learn some better ways of coping up with the challenges of upbringing their wards- the general need of the group members.;
- The purpose of the group is to provide a platform for the parents of mentally retarded children to share and exchange their skills in upbringing of the children—the purpose of the group formation.
- Agency's purpose is to make parents take more responsibility in bringing up their mentally retarded children.
- A parent's specific need is to learn to tackle the aggressive behaviour of his/her child and to make his/her spouse and other family members to accept the child.
- The group centered goal is that all members will share their problems without any reservations and will not waste the group's time by indulging in irrelevant issues.

All these are complementing and supplementing each other. For example, if the goal of joining the group is to question the policies of the agencies or to demand for more facilities then the goal is not complementary to other goals and create problems in attaining other goals, therefore, should not be included.

Structuring Group Session: Structuring the group session involves two aspects. First is structuring the time and the second addresses to the pattern of interactions. The

group has to work out how much time has to be allotted to each session, to each activity and to each member. The group has to evolve the modalities of adhering to the time schedules. It has also to work out alternatives in case of failure to adhere to the time schedules. For example it has to spend 30 minutes for a video show but because of the electricity failure, the video could not be played. Instead of idling away the time the group can have a discussion focused on the theme of the videotape.

The interactions among the members and between the members and the worker have to be structured. Structuring the interactions includes how to address each other, how to and when to intervene and interrupt, how to encourage docile and shy members to participate and control the domination of some members. It also includes certain group norms that are to be followed strictly by the members.

Reviewing the Contract: At the time of enrolling, the members and worker entered into an agreement of working together. At that time the members might not have good understanding about the whole exercise. After attending to the orientation and having initial interactions with the worker and with each other, members and worker may feel the need to change some conditions of the contract, for example, the frequency of meetings, time and duration of the meetings, and the fees etc. The contract is reviewed and new clauses are introduced or some clauses are deleted from the original contract with mutual consent.

Creating an environment that is conducive for the healthy conduct of the group session is a continuous process. The physical arrangements, financial back up and mobilising resources are the areas the group members and the worker have to work on.

4.6 PHASE III: MIDDLE (ACTIVE WORKING) PHASE

This phase occupies the major part of the working life of the group. Members attend the sessions regularly and actively working towards accomplishing its purpose and goals – general group maintenance goals, common group goals and individual member goals. The steps involved in this stage are:

- Making arrangements for the conduct of group sessions
- Structuring the time
- Facilitating group meetings
- Assessment of the group's progress

Making Arrangements for Group Sessions: The group gears up for attaining various goals it is pursuing. The worker and the members plan and make preparation for the group meetings. The worker has to spend considerable amount of time in developing the activities and procedures for the conduct of the group meetings. A number of decisions have to be taken with regard to the selection of an activity or task, sequencing of the tasks and activities, assigning responsibilities etc. Materials and equipment to conduct the group activities have to be procured. Resource agencies and persons have to be contacted.

For example, a pre-retirement counselling group may plan for exercises that would give them an idea about the possible changes that take place in their social status and roles and how best to cope up with the new situation. The possible exercises could be role-plays, screening of a video followed with a discussion, an orientation lecture session by an expert counselor in the field etc.

Structuring the Time: The worker continues this task of setting the time limits for group sessions and individual tasks which has already been initiated in the previous phase as the life of the group is for a specified period. The members and the worker have to be quite conscious of using time to get maximum benefit out of the group meetings. It is often the tendency to delay the start the meetings for the sake of latecomers. Delaying the starting time may encourage late coming and cause inconvenience to others who report in time. It also happens that the meetings are either closed early or late. This is also not healthy as it causes inconvenience to members who have other works to attend and discourage them to attending or they may not pay proper attention to the group activity. Further, it is quite possible to get totally engrossed in a particular group task and lose track of the time. This may spill over into the other activity and giving it insufficient time. Consequently the benefits from the other activity are badly affected. So it is important that members must carefully structure their time and follow it.

Facilitating the Group Sessions: It is not sufficient just to plan and prepare for the group sessions. The very reason for forming the group is to enable the members to come on to one platform to work towards solving their problems, which they could not solve individually. This suggests that the group needs guidance and support to carry out the tasks it has set forth. The worker has to take a lead in this and facilitate the group to perform its tasks successfully

At this stage of group's life, the members seriously pursue the goals of both individual and group. Worker encourages members to actively involve in the group activities, may they be sharing, discussing, and performing a task. The worker develops some

insight into their strengths and weaknesses. It may be noticed that some members are performing well and while others do not show progress. Because of this the group's progress is affected. The worker has to facilitate the non-performing members to perform. Equipped with the sound knowledge base in human behaviour he/she assists each and every member to be aware of their cognitive processes intrapersonal processes – that are blocking their progress, and enables them to organise their social transactions – interpersonal interactions – in the group to establish purposeful relationship.

Intrapersonal limitations revolve around feelings, thoughts, beliefs and behaviour patterns of the member. For example when a member is asked to give his feeling about the just concluded group session, if he/she expresses that so and so member is rude in interacting, then the member is giving his thought but not the feeling which may unhappiness or happiness with the session. Sometimes the member does not understand the association between these cognitive processes. In the above example the link between the thoughts and feelings are not established if the member could link the association between the thoughts of being dealt rudely by others during the course of the session and his/her being unhappy. In another case a member may entertain irrational thoughts and beliefs. In the above example if a member says that he/she feels the behaviour of a particular member is rude towards him/her because the member resembles somebody in his/her past with whom he/she had bad relationships. The worker facilitates the member to perform in desired direction by making them to understand these mental states. The worker then make suggestions for reframing and restructuring of the thoughts and expressions, as well as for stopping of the recurrence of unhealthy thoughts to enable the member to deal with these cognitive processes.

The worker facilitates interpersonal interactions whenever he/she finds them deteriorating. Deteriorating interpersonal relations are discerned when members fail to communicate with each other, participate in the group activities, avoids some members, differ and pick up quarrels with each other and form subgroups and work against each other. The worker helps to improve the interpersonal interactions by introducing a number of ice breaking, role-playing, modeling, and simulation exercises.

At the environmental level worker connects the members with resources, creates congenial physical and social environment.

Assessment of Group's Performance: The group processes are assessed with a view to ensure that group attains its goals. It provides proper direction and guidance to the group. It includes the assessment of the levels of participation and involvement of group members in the group activities, the changes that are taking place in the members' perceptions, attitudes and behaviours, acquisition of new skills and strengthening of existing skills that would help members to deal with their problem areas and growth points out the areas for and type of interventions that have to be planned and implemented by the worker at individual level as well as at the group level. The assessment is being done by the worker, members themselves and others who are associated with the group. The tools that help in the assessment are:

Structured observations by the worker and other members and self-observations of members themselves. For example, it is decided to assess the communication patterns among the members. The worker and members are informed in advance or later that is during or after a specific task has been performed, to note their observations on various aspects of communication such as the language, the gestures, modes of communication – verbal or non-verbal – the member/s resorts to.

Recording of the group meetings — written reports, audiotapes and videotapes, measurement scales of behaviour and sociogram etc. The interaction patterns, behaviour manifestations, group attraction, situation leading to conflicts, subgroup formations, leadership styles are some areas that can be assessed by the above mentioned tools. The process and procedures of assessment are carried out with or without prior knowledge of members.

4.7 PHASE IV: EVALUATION

Evaluation is an integral component of social group work. The term evaluate simply means to examine the value of. According to Trecker (1955), it attempts to measure the quality of group's experience in relation to the objectives and functions of the agency. Evaluation provides the necessary feedback on the performance of the group. It is carried out after the end of group work activity and before the group is terminated or sometimes after the group is terminated depending upon the purpose of the evaluation. It focuses on the worker's performance, agency support, the group process and growth of the members. The evaluation may be entrusted to the worker or to someone in the agency or to an outside expert.

It points out that whether the worker competently dealt with the group work process or not. What shortcomings are constraining the worker to perform better? It enables him/her to gain confidence and make efforts to improve his/her professional knowledge and skills, gives him/her the satisfaction that he/she is contributing for good of the profession and the society.

Evaluation provides information to the agency as to the quality of its service and the additional efforts it has to make to improve its quality of services. The support it has extended to the worker and group is at the desired level or not.

It throws light on effectiveness and ineffectiveness of planning and conducting the group sessions. How far they could accomplish the goals for which they were planned. Whether inbuilt monitoring systems are useful and are properly executed or not.

It assesses the progress each and every member has made. The extent to which each member made use of the group experience to effectively handle his/her problem/need. The changes that have come in the member/s are to the desired extent or not.

Finally, it indicates measures to be taken not to repeat the mistakes or overcome the shortcomings for future groups formations and processes. Therefore evaluation is not just a routine administrative job but also a guide for the future.

Evaluation is a form of research process. It involves data collection and analysis of data. The first step in evaluation is to formulate the aims and objectives. This exercise draws boundaries to the area of evaluation. For example the aim of the evaluation is to find out the competencies and abilities of the worker

The second step considers what type of data and sources from which the data are to be collected. Whether it is verbal or non-verbal data. For example, to know the performance of the worker the views of the members are taken or the movements and gestures of the worker are examined with the help of video tapes. The sources of data could be from the progress reports maintained by the worker, notes and other task files written by the members of the group, other staff of the agency and outside resource agencies/persons.

Third step involves collection of data. The evaluator meets respondents and issues questionnaires, collects them, administer interviews with respondents and studies records and reports—written, audio and video.

Fourth step is analysis of the data. The data gathered is processed and analysed and conclusions are drawn. For example if the aim is to find out whether individual member's goals are attained, the conclusions could be yes or no.

Fifth elaborates the implications for the future. Based on the outcome of the evaluation necessary changes and improvements are made in future group work practice for better results.

4.8 PHASE V: TERMINATION OF THE GROUP

All things have to come to an end whether one likes or not and social work group is no exception. The end could take place on a positive or on a negative note. That is it happens since the group has accomplished its purpose and goals or the time has lapsed or even because of failure to carry on further. Therefore, the termination of the group may be scheduled or unscheduled. The unscheduled termination takes place when the members fail to attend the group sessions continually or drops out prematurely. This happens due to various reasons. It could be due to a faulty enrollment, or failure of the members to develop relationships, or unresolved conflicts among the members and subgroups, or style of functioning of the worker and so on. This form of terminating of the group is disturbing and disappointing to the worker as it reflects on his/her professional competence. Nothing much can be done in cases of unscheduled or abrupt endings.

In case of a scheduled termination the worker has to take into consideration number of measures to ensure smooth closure. The reaction of the members to the termination of the group varies. The worker has to have an idea as to the possible responses and reactions the members express for the ending. The members may welcome or disapprove the ending. Members mind could be wavering between feelings of happiness or unhappiness. Heap (1985) termed these as feelings of ambivalence. One state of mind looks at the ending as a good relief as there exists no need to face a number of pressures of coping with the group norms, need not interact with those they do not get along well, perhaps, even the group worker no longer have to share the private and confidential information particularly in groups where the self disclosure is a precondition and emphasised.

While for other state of mind, the thought of disengaging with the group is a shock and unacceptable, feelings of getting once again isolated and alone in dealing with the problem/ need generates anxiety and fear; the reality that the nurtured relationships with other members coming to a close leads to worry; the thought of missing the support and guidance of the worker produces feelings of being abandoned and orphaned, how to fill the vacuum created in the personal time that was used for attending and preparing for group meetings is a real challenge to face.

The worker has to be aware of these type of likely reactions and responses of the members to the idea of parting with the group and work towards termination.

The preparations for termination are very much included in the middle phase itself.

It is important to prepare the members to the fact that whatever desirable behaviour patterns the member/s experience and exhibit have to be carried forward even after the

group comes to an end. The worker has to create situations within the group environment and even identify the real life situations where the member/s can act out the changed behaviours independently. This takes care of many of the members worry about missing the group support once the group ends.

Some follow-up sessions can be promised to reassure the member/s that they are not totally abandoned. Some support and guidance is still available either from worker or other members. The worker shall arrange activities wherein both worker and other members express their assessment of the progress already made and improvements to be made by each and every one of them. This exercise makes room for the group to deliberate upon what efforts the member/s have to make after the termination. Worker can suggest referral agencies to the members who need guidance and support for other shortcomings in future. Further, the worker gives assurance to the members that whatever self-disclosures made by them are kept confidential and will never be used against their interests. Members themselves share same type of assurances.

In addition to these the worker has to do other routine tasks such as preparing a report on the performance of the group, acknowledge the services and support given by resource agencies/persons, and pay the pending dues.

4.9 ROLE OF GROUP WORKER IN GROUP FORMATION STAGES

The group worker is the key player in the formation of the group. The worker plays a number of roles. He/she plays the most widely shared roles of social worker in general viz., enabler, mediator, advocate, educator, and facilitator. The roles specific to social work group are that of a leader and decision maker

As enabler the worker furnishes the necessary information to members so that members' doubts are clarified and their participation levels improve. Encourages the member/s who takes initiatives in performing the group tasks.

As mediator, the worker resolves the conflicts in the group by liaison. Brings conflicting members onto discussion forum and interprets each member's points of view so that the misunderstandings that caused the conflict are put to an end. The worker also mediates the negotiations between the group and the other staff of the agency and other resource agencies.

As advocate the worker presents the case of the members to the agency authorities to secure certain additional facilities and concessions. Pleads on behalf of the member with family and/or with the community to cooperate with the member by way of accommodating the member's needs. He/She presents the case of the member/s to the referral services.

As educator the worker clarifies the misconceptions the member/s have about various aspects such as the problem/need, irrational beliefs, unfounded fears etc. He passes on information to the members about the developments taking place in the areas concerning their social situations.

As facilitator the worker creates congenial environment for the group to go ahead with its activities and tasks. He/she procures the required material for the smooth conduct of the group sessions/tasks. The worker helps members who are shy and withdrawn type to participate by helping them to identify their intrapersonal and interpersonal shortcomings and assists them in overcoming these.

4.10 ROLE AS A LEADER

The group worker also plays the role of a leader in the group. As a professional with sound knowledge base in human behaviour and social interactions and interpersonal relations, the group worker automatically assumes leadership role. Till the time the group has its leader from among the members the worker discharges the functions of a leader. Douglas discussed four leadership acts the worker performs viz., preparation, intervention (working), intervention (control) and evaluation.

The worker provides directions to group members in planning the group activities, making preparations for carrying out the planned activities and finally in carrying out activities.

He exercises controls over those members who are either not cooperative or involving in actions that are detrimental to the group's norms and purposes.

Takes initiatives in mobilising the resources both material and human. Connects members to resource agencies and persons. Oversees the utilisation of the available resources by the members for the common good of the group as well as for the benefit of individual members.

Reminds member/s about their goals and facilitates them to pursue their goals.

Protects and supports the weak members from those members who are inclined to exploit them.

He also performs the role as decision maker. Decision making is to choose among the alternatives available. A number of decisions have to be taken in planning and organising group and its activities. The decision-making process starts from the conception of the

group to that of termination of the group. At every stage decisions have to be made. For example, a decision has to be taken to decide the size and composition of the group in the formation stage. They have to be made independently by the worker or made in active consultation with and involvement of members, agency administrators and other staff and at times even with resource and referral agencies. Even though the worker has conviction in the democratic process, still the worker is compelled to take decision as the group is in a fix or dilemma to take decisions.

Finally, the worker as a leader develops and promotes leadership in the group. The worker identifies the potential leaders from among the members and creates opportunities for them to take up leadership responsibilities.

4.11 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have studied the different factors that necessitate social workers to plan for a social work group and the significant place group has in meeting the needs of people. We have learnt that social work groups are different from other groups as they come into existence for a specific purpose of enabling people in need to resolve their needs through group experience which under constant guidance from a professional trained social worker. We also have information about the types of social work groups that can be thought of by the worker keeping in mind the needs/problem situation of the members, the interests of the agency and the availability of resources. We have learnt that the social work group formation has a number of phases and each phase has a number of steps, which the worker and members have to carefully involve. We have also examined the role of social group worker in group formation. We have discussed the generic social work roles as well as the roles specific to social group work viz., leadership and decision making roles.