



# Group Work: A Social Work Approach with Refugees

Nancy J Murakami, LCSW

Friends of Kisoro, Program Manager

Nyakabande Refugee Transit Camp, Uganda

26-27 March 2018



# Objectives

- By the end of this training, participants will be able to:
  - Describe group therapy approaches
  - Explain the goals and rationale of group work
  - Apply group knowledge and skills to Nyakabande Transit Camp
  - Demonstrate application of psychoeducation skills in a group setting
  - Demonstrate application of affect regulation skills in a group setting
  - Demonstrate application of promoting group cohesion in a group setting





“Social support has been identified across many situations as being the primary, and most effective, coping strategy used by displaced populations for both children and adults”

Horn, 2009, p. 112

A dark grey arrow points to the right from the left edge of the slide. Several thin, curved lines in shades of blue and grey originate from the left side and sweep across the slide towards the right.

# Benefits of Group Work with Trauma Survivors

- Reduce isolation
- Build Social support
- Normalize reactions
- Validate survival experiences and strategies
- “I am not the only one”
- Learn from others and teach others
- Motivation to disclose history and ask for help
- Build courage, confidence, and hope to continue/heal





# Rationale for group work at Nyakabande

- ▶ Cost-efficient
- ▶ Human resource-efficient
- ▶ Some arrive knowing nobody
- ▶ History of interpersonal violence : Response of interpersonal support
- ▶ Loss of trust in others : Re-establishing trust in others
- ▶ Shame, guilt related to highly stigmatized experiences
- ▶ Re-building community
- ▶ Build skills for coping with stressors of ongoing refugee experience
- ▶ MORE?





# Types of Groups

- ▶ Supportive Groups
- ▶ Psychodynamic Focused Groups
- ▶ Cognitive-Behavioral Focused Groups





# Supportive Group Therapy

- Present-focused
- Focus on current stressors and coping
- Support for daily living
- Validation of impact of trauma experiences
- Little attention on details of traumatic events
- Reducing isolation
- Open or closed format

(Bunn et al, 2016; Foy et al, 2001)





# Psychodynamic Group Therapy

- ▶ Disclosing and exploring the past
- ▶ Meaning-making of reactions/symptoms
- ▶ Explore conscious and unconscious self-concepts
- ▶ Develop a cohesive narrative of their experience







# Cognitive-Behavioral Group Therapy

- ▶ Skills-building
- ▶ Exposure to and processing of past experiences
- ▶ Challenge distorted cognitions



A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide. It features a dark grey arrow pointing to the right at the top. Below it, several thin, curved lines in shades of blue and grey sweep across the page, creating a sense of movement and design.

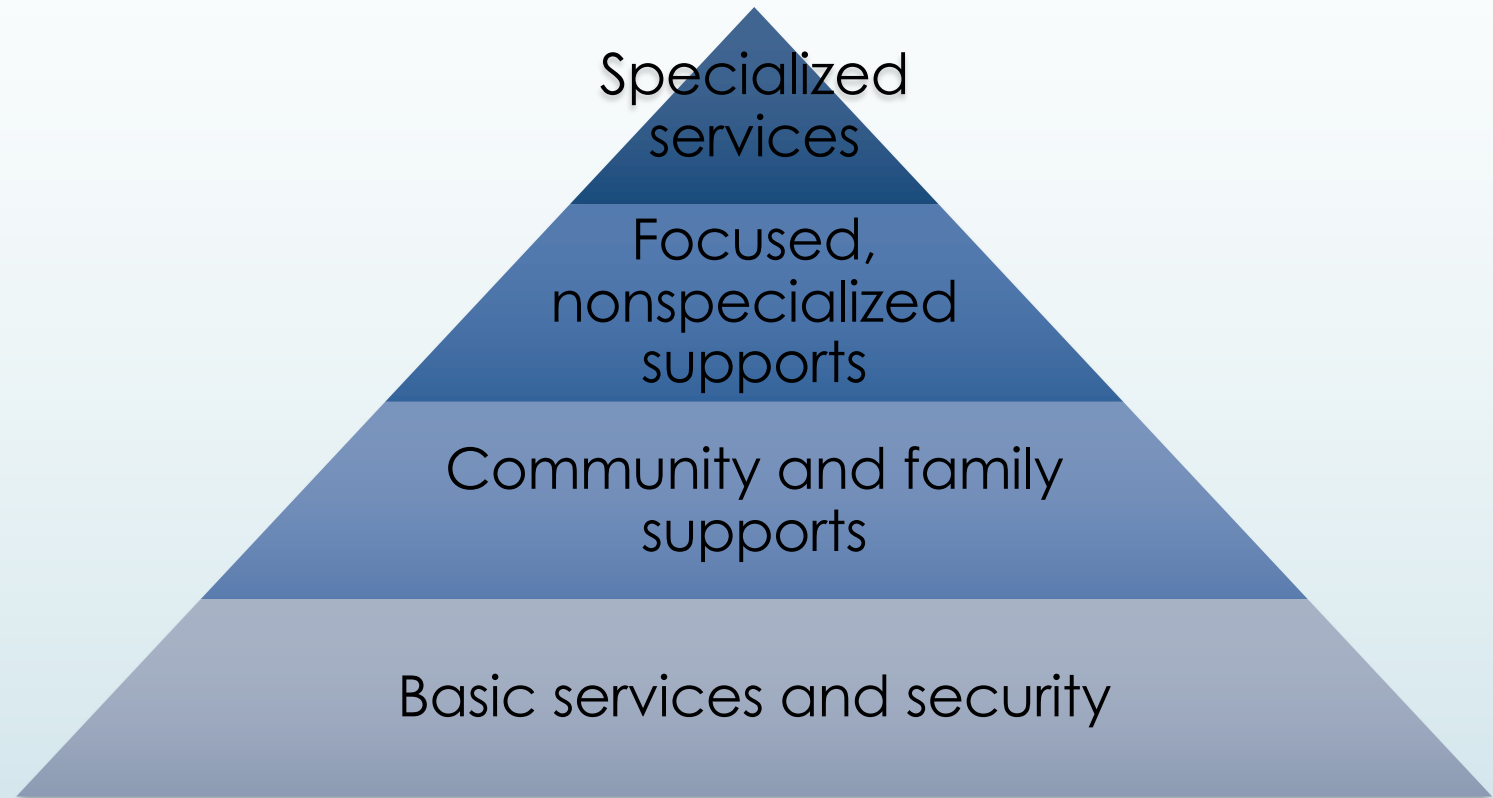
# Group Therapy 11 Therapeutic Factors (Yalom)

- ▶ Instillation of hope
- ▶ Universality
- ▶ Imparting Information
- ▶ Altruism
- ▶ Corrective Recapitulation
- ▶ Socializing techniques
- ▶ Imitative behavior
- ▶ Interpersonal learning
- ▶ Group cohesiveness
- ▶ Catharsis
- ▶ Existential factors





# IASC Intervention pyramid for MHPSS in emergencies.






# Recommendation for Nyakabande: Refugee Transit Camp – PsychoSocial Support Group (RTC-PSSG)

- ▶ trauma-informed, Skills-Building, psychoeducational, supportive group
- ▶ Structures & Manualized
- ▶ 4-6 sessions, 2 hours, 2X/week, single gender
- ▶ Group clients: adult refugees who flee to Uganda following war, violence, threats, and other human rights abuses.
- ▶ The group objectives:
  - ▶ to enhance refugee's awareness of psychosocial well-being
  - ▶ to build on current resilience by expanding distress management skills,
  - ▶ to promote community-building in order to reduce isolation and build support systems.





“the basic posture of the therapist to a patient must be one of concern, acceptance, genuineness, [and] empathy”

Yalom, 1985, p. 112





# Skills Building Practice

- ▶ Opening and Closing Ritual
- ▶ Psycho-education
- ▶ Affect Regulation
  - ▶ Muscle relaxation
  - ▶ Breathing
  - ▶ Grounding
- ▶ Sleep Hygiene



# Groups for Children and Adolescents

► (Foy, 2001)







# Next Steps in 2018

- April-June: Charity and Nancy developing Group Intervention and Manual
- July: Charity and Betsy piloting some of the skills from the group
- August: Nancy trains psychosocial workers in implementing Refugee Transit Camp – PsychoSocial Support Group (RTC-PSSG)
- August-September: Pilot runs of RTC-PSSG
- October: Evaluation of pilot implementation; Make modifications



# Resources

- ▶ Bunn, M., Goesel, C., Kinet, M. and Ray, F. (2016) Group treatment for survivors of torture and severe violence: A literature review. *Torture Volume*, 26, 1, 45-67
- ▶ Foy, D.W., Eriksson, C.B., & Trice, G.A. (2001). Introduction to group interventions for trauma survivors. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research and Practice*, 5(4), 246-251.
- ▶ Horn, R. (2009). Coping with displacement: problems and responses in camps for the internally displaced. *Intervention*, 7(2), 110-129.
- ▶ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) (2007). IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings. Geneva: IASC.
- ▶ Yalom, I.D. (1985). *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Basic Books, Inc.

