Leadership & International Social work

Leadership Workshop Seminars
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Session objectives

- To demystify leadership
- To discuss how to prepare for leadership in international social work
- To discuss what to expect in international social work
- Questions
Demystifying Leadership

What is leadership?

“The ability to influence a group toward the achievement of a particular goal”

“Leadership is about unlocking potential to have a greater impact through collective action”

- It does not have to be a position, or charisma
- The nature of social work makes us leaders all the time
- Engaging in international social work makes us leaders
Traits of a Good Leader in International social work

- Adaptable
- Alert to social environment
- Achievement oriented
- Assertive
- Cooperative
- Decisive
- Dependable

- Persistent
- Self-confident
- Tolerant of stress
- Willing to assume responsibility
Skills of a Good Leader in International Social Work

- Conceptually skilled
- Creative
- Diplomatic
- Relationship builder
- Tactful
- Knowledgeable of groups
- Socially skilled
How do I prepare for leadership in international social work?

1. Attempt to understand the indigenous communities
2. Assess the costs and benefits of engaging in international social work
3. Clarify and specify expectations, roles and responsibilities associated with your position
Be prepared to:

- Open your mind to new ways of thinking
- Be aware of your own values and beliefs
- Appreciate differences
- Be culturally sensitive
- Familiarize yourself with anti-discriminatory laws in the country
- Professional identity development
Open your mind to new ways of thinking

“To know yet to think that one does not know is best; Not to know yet to think that one knows will lead to difficulty.” Lao Tzu

- Before you begin your practice, visit the local practitioners and ask questions
- Inquire what is appropriate dress code, language, and etiquette
- Inquire what the social work intervention frameworks are
- Read the local code of ethics
Be aware of your own values and beliefs

- Adapting
  - Time management
  - Accepting/declining food and gifts
  - Privacy
  - Male dominance

Bottom line - be patient, everything will fall in place in due time. Trust and building relationships is more important.
Appreciate differences

- Some cultural practices may be “unacceptable” to you – be diplomatic
  - Take time to build relationships before intervening
- You will have limited resources – be creative
- Conducting meetings may be different – be cooperative
Be culturally sensitive

- Obtain the blessings of the local leadership to operate in the community
- “Hand over the stick”. Listen & learn from the local experts
- Find out the protocol for doing business
- Understand the nuance of relationships
  - Conduct with local elders and community leaders
- Understand resistance you might face with interventions implemented
Familiarize yourself with anti-discriminatory laws in the country

- Social work is based on social justice. Learn/understand the law of the land – (alert social environment)
- Be tactful learn from/shadow local practitioners
- Remember you are working within these laws, be persistent but wise
Social work is not the same everywhere

In places where the profession is still young be a leader in shaping the profession

Work with the local practitioners on issues that affect the profession
Social work leadership & Power

- Social workers are in very powerful positions in respect to the people we seek to help.
- This power may or may not be exercised responsibly.
- Given the vulnerability of the people we help, highest ethical standards & sensitivity is needed.
How can Social work leaders limit their power over indigenous communities?

- Partner with the communities
  - Building broader leadership capacity at all levels enhances your effectiveness and success in achieving sustained impact.
- Use SOWO 570
Questions