

# DECIDE WHAT ACTION TO TAKE TO HELP CHILDREN



# INTRODUCTION

There are many children and households that need help. It may not be possible to help everyone. Members of a Circles of Support group must be very clear about the kind of help they can give. Members should try to discuss with a household what support is possible. When the group cannot help, it can tell people about other places that may be able to help.

This session has been written as a guide for facilitators. It provides an outline of a process that participants, with the help of a facilitator, can work through in order to do the following:

1. Identify children that are not attending school.
2. Prioritise which children need help most.
3. Visit the households where there are children in need.
4. Decide what support you can offer children and households in need.

Circles of Support groups can take four steps to help decide what action to take:

- **Step 1:**  
**Identify children whose schooling is affected by difficulties at home** (page 65)  
In this step, participants will think about ways to identify children who are not attending school regularly or who have dropped out of school.
- **Step 2:**  
**Make a home visit** (page 67)  
In this step, participants will discuss what happens during a home visit. They will do some simple activities to help them prepare for making a home visit.
- **Step 3:**  
**Prioritise actions to help children stay in school** (page 73)  
In this step, participants will discuss and decide on which actions to take to help children to stay in school.
- **Step 4:**  
**Return to the household and discuss possible actions to help children stay in school** (page 74)  
In this step, participants will discuss the importance of going back to the household to discuss possible actions to help children stay in school.

At different stages in this session you will see a box called **Main teaching points**. The points that are written here are the most important messages that you should be thinking about and discussing with participants in this session.



## STEP 1

### Identify children whose schooling is affected by difficulties at home

*Who is involved:* neighbourhood agents and school convenors

*What you need:*

In this step, participants will discuss ways to identify children who are not attending school regularly or who have stopped going to school because of difficulties that they face at home.

**TIME**  
**60**  
mins

#### Activity

1. Ask participants to work in small groups. They must brainstorm examples of ways to find out which children need support to stay in school.
2. When they have done this, ask one person from each group to tell the whole group what ideas they had.

#### Main teaching points

##### Examples of ways to find out which children need support to stay in school:

- Talk to a teacher to find out whether there are children who are tired, unable to concentrate, who don't come to school regularly or who have stopped coming at all.
- Ask your school to give you a list of names of children who have been registered as orphans.
- Speak to a community leader to find out more about a household where the children do not seem to be going to school.
- Ask community members whether they know of children who have no one to look after them.
- Meet with a local NGO to find out which children need support and whether anything is being done.

3. In the same small groups, tell participants to imagine that they have a list of children that need support to stay in school. Ask them to discuss how they will deal with the following important issues:

**?** *How will you prioritise which children need help most?*

*How will you deal with confidentiality when it comes to children?*

*How will you deal with the stigma children experience because of HIV and AIDS?*

4. Let one person from each group report back to the whole group.

### Main teaching points

#### **Prioritisation:**

- It is very difficult to decide which children need help most.
- The decision about priorities needs to be made by the Circles of Support group. It is not a decision that an individual can make alone.
- It is important that the Circles of Support group does not take on children and actions that it is unable to follow through.

#### **Confidentiality:**

- In a counselling situation, confidentiality may not be broken unless the person being counseled gives permission.
- Confidentiality is a difficult issue when it comes to deciding what is in the best interest of the child. Sometimes it may be in the best interests of the child to pass on this information in order to help them.
- It is important to respect the private matters of families and children. Members of the Circles of Support group must remember not to discuss in the community sensitive things they have learnt about individual children and families.

#### **Stigma:**

- Children are very badly affected by the stigma of HIV and AIDS. They may have to work harder at home than other children, they may be teased or bullied and it may become very hard for them to stay in school.
- Children themselves cannot change things. They need committed adults and organisations to fight for their rights and help to break down stigma.

## STEP 2

### Make a home visit

*Who is involved:* neighbourhood agents and school convenors  
*What you need:* copies of worksheet **Details of households in my Circles of Support group** (page 72)

**TIME**  
**60**  
mins

In this step, participants will discuss what happens during a home visit. They will do some simple activities to prepare themselves for the visit.

Explain to participants that the main aims of a home visit are:

1. To introduce the idea of Circles of Support to members of a household.
2. To collect important information about children in the household.

#### 1. Introduce the idea of Circles of Support to members of a household:

#### Activity

1. Take on the role of a Circles of Support group member. Introduce yourself in the following way:

#### Example of how to introduce the Circles of Support project

*Hello, my name is X. I'm a volunteer from the Circles of Support project. I am part of a group of volunteers from the local school and community. We call ourselves a Circles of Support group.*

*We want to make sure that all of our children are able to go to school even if they face difficulties at home.*

*I would like to talk to someone in this household to find out if the children here experience any difficulties in getting to school regularly.*

2. In the whole group, ask participants what they thought about the way you introduced yourself and whether they would change anything.

3. Ask participants to think about the following questions:

- ❓ **Who would you ask to speak to? An adult or an older child in the household?**
- What questions would you ask? (Think back about the importance of using open questions)**
- How would you find out about the kinds of problems that children in the household experience?**

4. In pairs, ask participants to think of some examples of difficult situations they may face when they do a home visit. When they have done this, ask them to do a role play which shows a difficult situation and how they would handle it.

In the role play, Person A should play the role of the Circles of Support group member. This person has to introduce the idea of Circles of Support. Person B should play the role of a member of the household.

Each pair should do their role play in front of the whole group and participants who are watching the role play should be able to comment and make suggestions after they have seen each role play.

## 2. Collect important information about children in the household:

### Activity

1. Read aloud the following description of a household in need.

#### Example of a household in need

*A neighbour contacts the Circles of Support group about this household. You visit this household and this is what you find:*



In this household there are seven family members.

The family members are:

- Lebo (grandmother 47 years)
- Mpho (Lebo's daughter 17 years)
- Samantha (Mpho's baby - 1 month old)
- Joseph (Lebo's son 16 years)
- Innocent (Lebo's grandson 10 years)
- Talitha (Lebo's granddaughter 9 years)
- Siphwiwe (Lebo's grandson 7 years)

Lebo is the head of the household. She is very ill. Her two children Mpho and Joseph live with her. Mpho's baby daughter lives here too. She had another daughter who died two years ago. This daughter had three children: Innocent, Talitha and Siphwiwe. They now live with Lebo.

No one works. Mpho went to school until she was sixteen but then fell pregnant and dropped out of school. Joseph also dropped out of school in standard 7 but he never found a job. None of the younger children go to school.

Mpho looks after her mother. She has tried a few times to make sure that the three younger children go to school. The problem is that Talitha says she often feels sick and stays at home most of the time. Innocent and Siphwiwe say they are going to school, but they never go. Instead they go to play with the other children down by the river. Mpho has to look after her own baby and her sick mother and doesn't know what to do about the younger children. There is no money for school uniforms and school fees for the three younger children.



## Main teaching points

### Listening skills

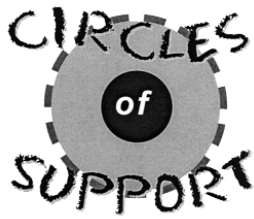
#### **To show that you are really listening to another person:**

- Sit face to face
- Keep your body open – don't cross arms and legs
- Lean towards the person
- Make eye contact
- Be relaxed

#### **When you listen, try to:**

- Think about what is being said
- Think about what is NOT being said
- Try to imagine what it must be like to be that person.
- Try to put the feelings you hear into words to help the person understand themselves and the situation better. For example, "You feel **angry** that your child was sent away from school because he was not wearing a school uniform".

5. In small groups, ask participants to look at copies of the Information sheet 2 — ***Details of households in my Circles of Support group*** on page 72. Give them time to practise using this form by filling in this information sheet using the information from the description of Lebo's household. Show them where this information sheet would go in the Circles of Support Diary.



## INFORMATION SHEET 2

### DETAILS OF HOUSEHOLDS IN MY CIRCLES OF SUPPORT GROUP

These are households that have children that the COS has identified as needing support, for example: child-headed households or households of children on the street. A form like this should be filled in for each household visited.

<b>Name and address of household:</b>			
<b>Household visited by:</b>			
<b>Date of first visit:</b>			
<b>Number of children:</b>	<b>How many children live here?</b>	<b>Number of children enrolled in school</b>	<b>Number of children attending school regularly this week</b>
0 - 6 years			
7 - 12 years			
13 - 18 years			
19 years and older (if still at school)			
<b>Is this a child-headed household?</b>			
<b>General observations (what you noticed during visit):</b>			
<b>Main issues discussed during visit:</b>			
<b>If household leaves the support group, give reason and date</b>			

		Handed out	Collected
Number of Activity Book	1	(no.)	(no.)
	2	(no.)	(no.)
	3	(no.)	(no.)

## STEP 3

### Prioritise actions to help children stay in school

*Who is involved:* neighbourhood agents and school convenors

*What you need:* Circles of Support game,  
blank cards,  
completed copies of Information sheet 2 —

***Details of households in my Circles of Support group***

TIME  
60  
mins

In this step participants will discuss how to prioritise actions to help children stay in school.

### Activity

1. Ask participants to work in small groups. Give each group a Circles of Support game. Ask each group to choose actions from the Circles of Support game that they would start with or prioritise to help the children in Lebo's household to stay in school. Give each group some blank cards in case they want to draw an action that doesn't appear in the game. Ask the group to choose between 3 to 5 actions only.

Remind participants that the list of actions is like a 'menu of possibilities'. This does not mean that a Circles of Support group would be able to do a large number of these things. Encourage participants to be realistic about what action/s they can take to support these children.

2. Let each small group present their answers to the whole group and allow some time for discussion.



## STEP 4

### Return to the household and discuss possible actions to help children stay in school

*Who is involved:* neighbourhood agents and school convenors

*What you need:* Circles of Support game

In this step participants will discuss how to approach a household to discuss possible actions to help children to stay in school.

**TIME**  
**60**  
mins

### Activity

1. Ask participants to work in small groups. Ask them to put in front of them the three to five game cards that show the actions they chose as priorities to help the children in Lebo's household to stay in school.
2. In the same small groups, ask participants to discuss the following questions:
  - ? ***What will you do if Lebo says she doesn't want the help of the Circles of Support group?***
  - What will you say if Lebo says that there are other more important problems or priorities than keeping the children in school?***
  - What will you do if Lebo asks you to help her with things that your group cannot cope with?***
  - How important do you think it is to include the children in the discussion about possible actions to help them stay at school?***
3. Let one person from each group report back to the whole group what they discussed. Allow some time for discussion in the whole group.

## Main teaching points

Here is a summary of the process that a Circles of Support group can go through to help children in need:

1. Find out information about children in need through the school and from the community.
2. Go to the household of a child in need and make a home visit.
3. Fill in Information sheet 2 - ***Details of households in my Circles of Support group.***
4. Meet as a Circles of Support group and discuss which children you can help and prioritise actions to help children stay in school.
5. Go back to the household and discuss actions that the Circles of Support group can offer to help a child or children stay in school and offer realistic support to the household.
6. Agree a plan of action with the household and child.
7. If there are needs that a Circles of Support group cannot respond to, refer the household to another organisation that can help.