**Social Work with Children: Scope and Skills**

Component-I (A) – Personal Details

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Component-I (B) Description of Module

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<tr>
<td>Subject Name</td>
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<td>Paper Name</td>
<td>Fields of Practice in Social Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Module Name/Title</td>
<td>Social Work with Children: Scope and Skills (Part III)</td>
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<td>Pre-requisites&lt;Expected to know before learning this module&gt;</td>
<td>Reading ‘Social Work with Children: An Introduction (Part I)’ and ‘Social Work with Children: Responding to Vulnerability (Part II)’</td>
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| Objectives                                 | • To gain greater awareness about the scope of social work intervention  
|                                            | • To learn about social work with children across different settings  
|                                            | • To gain an overview of the basic skills of social worker |
| Key words                                  | Intervention, skills                                       |

Module

1. Module: Social Work with Children: Scope and Skills (Part III)
2. Introduction
3. Learning Outcome
4. Scope of Social Work Intervention
   4.1 Direct Work with Children
   4.2 Working with Family and Other Significant Adults
   4.3 Range of Macro Work
5. Basic Skills for working with Children
   5.1 Perspective building on Social Work with Children
   5.2 Principles of Working with Children
   5.3 Key areas in Skill Building
6. Conclusion
1. **Module:** Social Work with Children: Scope and Skills (Part III)

2. **Introduction**
   Social work with children is one of the core areas of social work intervention. There is varied scope of social work with children across different settings. To be able to work effectively with children or on issues concerning children, certain core skills are required. The Module outlines the range of work that can be undertaken across different settings and basic skills of working with children.

3. **Learning Outcome**
   By the end of this Module the students/learners are expected to know:
   - The scope of social work intervention while working with children
   - The range of work that can be undertaken across different settings and sites of practice
   - Basic skills of social work with children

4. **Scope of Social Work Intervention**
   Any kind of social work with children needs to adhere to the overarching framework of the constitutional provisions in India, the national laws, policies, programmes, and schemes that address different issues concerning children. If we find that there are certain gaps in any of the above or that implementation is not happening to the desired extent we can create advocacy and/or campaigns around the same to ensure that the required changes are made. The overall vision of social work with children would be to ensure child rights and child protection for each and every child in society. Child rights is based on the core principles of non-discrimination, right to survival, right to participation, and best interest of the child. As per the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of children) Act, 2015, “best interest of child” means the “basis for any decision taken regarding the child, to ensure fulfilment of his basic rights and needs, identity, social well-being and physical, emotional and intellectual development”

   Child protection is about addressing child rights violation or preventing children from experiencing situations of violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect. Fulfilment of child rights is a critical responsibility of adults in society who are the *duty bearers*. The family, community, and State are mandated to work towards child rights.

   Social work with children can be undertaken at different levels and for different purposes. Intervention can be designed for developmental, preventive, and therapeutic purposes. Given below are further details: (Figure 1.)

4.1 **Direct Work with Children:** Since the number of children requiring care and protection is large, there is immense scope to engage in direct work with children. Many of us are inclined towards direct work with children; either through work with individual children or through groups. Direct work with children and youth is possible with very young children, school going children, adolescents as well as youth who are nearing adulthood (the word children refers to all young persons who have not completed eighteen years of age).

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**Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC): Key Entitlements**
- Age of the child as eighteen years
- Right to identity and protection from discrimination
- Birth registration
- Right to family
- Right to reunification with family
- Right to special care for children with disability
- Right to health
- Right to education
- Right to juvenile justice
- Right to rest and leisure
- Right to protection from sexual abuse and exploitation
- Right to humanitarian assistance for a child with refugee status

**Ref:** Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Direct work with children can be undertaken in different ways and across different settings; for example, one can work with children in schools, communities, in residential care institutions, shelter homes, contact centres or drop-in centres, hospitals, education projects, vocational training centres, and child guidance clinics. A large number of children without family or family support come within the purview of the juvenile justice system. Within the juvenile justice system one can work with two groups of children; child in need of care and protection and child in conflict with law. We can either directly work with the probation department, liaison with the child welfare committee and the juvenile justice board or as part of an organization or NGO work at different levels within the juvenile justice system. The juvenile justice system has several mandated residential care institutions (Observation Home, Children’s Home, Special Home, Place of Safety). We can directly work with the children admitted in these Homes in areas such as family tracing, counselling, rehabilitation, health, education, and vocational guidance. We can also work with the families of the children.

Further, direct work with children can be in the following areas:

- Adoption
- Foster Care
- Sponsorship
- School social work
- Community-based programmes (education, child labour, child marriage, health, nutrition)
- Outreach work at railway stations
- Hospital
- Child guidance centres or clinics
- Skill building with adolescents or youth
- Direct work with specific groups of children (girl child, children with disability, child in addiction, child sexual abuse, etc.)
- Institutions or Homes within the juvenile justice system or Homes managed by other registered organisations as per State rules and procedures
- Specialised work such as trauma counselling
- Rehabilitation work with children rescued from trafficking or children within the juvenile justice system
- Aftercare for children who are completing eighteen years of age but may continue to require support and guidance

**What can we do?**

We first need to assess about the child’s situation, areas of vulnerability, impact on the child and scope for intervention. Assessment is not a one-time or one-way process. It is an ongoing, periodic, and reciprocal process and includes the optimal participation of the child. Through assessment we can gain an understanding of the needs of the child, violation of rights, if any, and plan an intervention accordingly. For example, children who are victims or survivors of disasters and/or violence require psychosocial and trauma care along with other priorities.
We can do any of the following or a combination of approaches depending on the circumstances of the child:

- Working on the physical, social, psychological and emotional needs of children
- Identifying areas of vulnerability and risk
- Crisis intervention for children who have been victims or survivors of abuse or exploitation
- Working on rehabilitation with children who come within the purview of the juvenile justice system
- Working with the family and other significant adults in the child’s life
- Working with the legal framework and taking recourse to the law wherever required
- Planning for both short term care and long term stability

4.2 Working with Family and Other Significant Adults: A child closely interacts with adults especially during the formative years. They are also dependent upon adults for fulfilment of the basic needs and requirements. Hence working with adults is a very important component of social work with children. At the micro level a child interacts with parents, school teachers, other relations, doctor, neighbourhood, and community persons. At the macro level there are many individuals who indirectly impact the child's life such as the police, government officials, and other stakeholders who influence the policy and legislative framework. Implementation of laws, allocation of adequate budget, access to quality school services, protective mechanism in the community through a vigilant police and community have a direct bearing on child rights and child protection. Therefore, there is a wide scope of work with significant adults at the micro and macro level. The overall aim would be towards creating a culture of ‘child friendly’ approach at all levels of society across all adults. According to the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, “child friendly” means “any behaviour, conduct, practice, process, attitude, environment or treatment that is humane, considerate and in the best interest of the child”.

Some of the areas of working with adults are:

- Awareness and sensitization programmes on existing policy and legal framework, different issues concerning children, etc. with parents, family, teachers, police, health officials, legal persons, social workers, government personnel, etc.
- Skill building workshops on parenting and issues of domestic violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation
- Skill building workshops with teachers
- Capacity building workshops with NGO and civil society
- Working with other stakeholders on strengthening child rights and child protection work within their own systems (police, health, judiciary, government, education)

**Child Rights Programming**

“Child Rights Programming is a framework for the analysis, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of all relief and development work with children. It brings together a range of ideas, concepts and experiences related to child rights, child development, emergency response and development work within one unifying framework. It is primarily based on the principles and standards of children’s human rights but also draws heavily on good practice in many areas of work with children (e.g. the study of children’s physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development; childhood studies; early childhood education; child psychology; etc.) as well as good development practice more generally” (pp:8)

**Source:** Save the Children Alliance, *Child Rights Programming: How to Apply Rights-Based Approaches to Programming*
✓ Sensitizing community adults towards increasing their alertness on children's issues and proactively mitigating children's problems
✓ Workshops to enhance vocational guidance facilities
✓ Workshops to strengthen rehabilitation of children who are within the purview of the juvenile justice system
✓ Developing a framework of child rights programming

4.3 Range of Macro Work: Macro work is as important as micro work with children as macro level factors impact life situation of children. There are different things that one can engage with at the macro level. Given below are a few areas:

✓ Engaging with concerned State Departments working on children’s issues in the arena of policy formulation, implementation, and other consultative processes
✓ Working with human rights or child rights commissions at the national and state level (National Human Rights Commission, National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights and related State Commissions)
✓ Working with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or civil society initiatives. Within civil society initiatives one can directly work with children, or engage with fund raising/project management/administration/staff development and/or governance
✓ Engaging in research and evidence-based practice
✓ Training and capacity building or skill enhancement programmes with stakeholders engaged in working with children
✓ Participating in networking, collaboration, advocacy, and campaigns
✓ Fund raising
✓ Writing about child related issues to generate awareness and increase sensitivity
✓ Working on law related areas either through direct practice as a lawyer or through participation in legal literacy and awareness


5. Basic Skills for working with Children

Skills is the level of efficiency or competence with which we can do an activity/function and/or responsibility. Skills cannot operate in a vacuum. Social workers working with children build their practice on a range of theories, perspective, approach, knowledge, skills, and research. Social workers working with children build their practice on a range of theories, perspective, approach, knowledge, skills, and research. For effective
social work with children, first and foremost we require to develop our own knowledge and perspective on children. It is not sufficient to only understand about situations that directly impact children. We also need to develop critical thinking skills, analyse the larger social realities and context which impact human life including that of children. (Figure 2.)

5.1 Perspective building on social work with children: To be able to be skilful in our work especially in the area of children we require information or need to build our knowledge around the following:

- Social realities, structures, issues, and social problems
- Local, state, national, and global socio-economic developments both at the society and Institutional level
- Discrimination, deprivation and oppression experienced by groups of people
- The policy framework, laws, schemes, and programmes directly or indirectly related to children
- Understanding different theoretical perspectives on children
- Environmental issues, climate change, and its impact on children
- Understanding the impact of conflict, violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children
- Conceptual clarity on networking, advocacy, collaboration, coordination, and campaign
- Parenting, child rearing, family, and its influence of children
- The different categories of vulnerable children, factors of vulnerability and its impact
- Rehabilitation and its mechanisms

5.2 Principles of Working with Children: Social work with children is based on core social work values and principles that recognise human dignity, capacity for growth, human empowerment, non-discrimination and non-judgemental attitude. Within the context of working with children a framework of principles becomes especially important as often children are dependent on adults to facilitate their development. Social work with children also entails keeping in mind the principle of best interest of the child.

5.3 Key areas in Skill Building: As mentioned earlier, the skills of a social worker working with children ranges from micro-level direct intervention with children, family, and other adult stakeholders to macro-level work of awareness building, networking, and advocacy. A social worker can intervene at the local, community, state, national, and global level depending on the nature and process of engagement. Some of the important skill building areas is given below:

Communication skills: this skill is very important as it encourages children to express, share, articulate, and participate in decision making processes. Communication skills can be micro-level skills that would be required for ‘interviewing’ children, or having an interaction with the child. To be able to communicate effectively it is important to have a perspective on child rights and child protection. Communication with a child must be sensitive to the cultural context of the child. The social worker must use words and language that is positive, non-discriminatory, empowering, and in a manner that the child can easily follow and understand. The important components of communication are words and language (verbal), non-verbal expression, thinking, and listening. Thinking is an important aspect of communication skills as our thoughts, perspective, attitude, and approach knowingly or unknowingly determines our words and nonverbal gestures. Some of the

What is Case Management?
Case management is a “way of organising and carrying out work to address an individual child’s (and their family’s) needs in an appropriate, systematic and timely manner, through direct support and/or referrals, and in accordance with a project or programme’s objectives” (Child protection working group Inter agency guidelines, 2014). The steps in case management are identifying and assessing the vulnerability, developing an individual case plan, planning the intervention, follow up, monitoring, review and closure. Case Management is based on principles of best interest of the child, child’s right to participation, non-discrimination, accountability, and confidentiality.
communication skills that a social worker can integrate in their work are the skills of listening, reflecting, probing, paraphrasing, and summarising. Communication at the macro level would involve putting forth views and information in a substantive and/or concise manner, substantiating it with research data and field experience, negotiating, lobbing for change and such other skills. Communication skills is not only about interacting with the child. Communication skills of the social worker also includes being able to work in a team, lead processes of change, willingness to adapt, share ideas and information, and flexibility in approach.

➢ **Assessment:** Without assessment and a clear understanding of the child’s situation it would be difficult to design a relevant plan of intervention. As mentioned earlier assessment is not a one-way process in which a child is ‘interviewed’ and the social worker ‘decides’ for the child. Assessment is a process whereby a social worker is able to analyse, determine, or estimate, the factors that has led to a situation of vulnerability and probable ways of addressing the same. Assessment can a one-time process or it can be a periodic ongoing review of the situation as social realities are dynamic. Assessment needs to ensure active involvement of the child, family, or other significant stakeholders in the child's life. It is a collective and collaborative process of engagement between the social worker and the child or the significant adults through which a plan of action or intervention is evolved. Assessment enables the social worker and the child to analyse the current situation, reflect upon it and collectively plan the next steps together. The process of assessment if undertaken in a sensitive manner and within the framework of child participation can become a positive experience for the child. It can convey to the child a sense of hope. Assessment can also become an opportunity for the child to ventilate, express feelings and emotions, and experience catharsis. Other than interaction with the child, assessment will also include an analysis of the available facts and data, knowledge of laws, policy and programme, which would be relevant to the situation and the prevailing social realities. Assessment has to be contextual and relevant to the needs of the child.

➢ **Planning and Implementing:** Social work is about intervention and action. Hence formulating the right course of action, taking well informed decisions, systematic design of the intervention is very important to achieve the desired result. Often social worker will need to make well-informed judgements about the child’s situation; balancing the child’s needs to safety and well-being with that of the needs of the family which may be in a vulnerable situation itself. Implementing is at the core of the intervention programme. Implementing includes putting the plans into concrete action, administration, monitoring and reviewing of work, ensuring that the objectives of the plan are being met, evaluation of the project or the programme as the case may be, analysing if things go wrong and timely correction of the same. Often field experience indicates that while the plan may have been thorough and well-designed, due to lack of adequate monitoring and periodic review, the output or outcome has not been as per the objectives. Hence monitoring and evaluation is crucial.

➢ **Referral, Networking, and Resource Mobilisation:** Networking, and resource mobilization are crucial skills for the social worker. As mentioned earlier, the number of children requiring attention is for higher than the available resources; both material and human. Material resources include budgetary provisions, infrastructure facilities, and adequate funds for appointment of well trained staff. Other resources are in the nature of services such as counselling service, health care, de-addiction centres teaching facilities, rehabilitation measures, vocational guidance, jobs, avenues for employment, etc. Social work is a complex and dynamic process. As social workers, we may not always be able to provide the entire range of support and intervention ourselves. Hence an important skill in social work with children is that of identifying accurately the needs of the child and referring the child to appropriate facilities and care if we are not in a position to provide it ourselves.
Networking and resource mobilisation become important to share resources, exchange ideas and information about better practices, create a dialogue for more impactful work, and optimally utilise available services for children. Networking can be at different levels. It can be initiated for individual situations or cases of children towards provision of resources/referral, and/or rehabilitation. Networking can also create forums and platforms for NGOs and civil society organisations to come together as the first starting point for advocacy. At the macro level, networking can be collaborative efforts between multi-disciplinary stakeholders such as social workers, academicians, police, government officials, and judiciary for working towards policy formulation and better implementation of laws and programs.

Advocacy and Campaigns: Advocacy and campaigns would be required across different levels of work with children. Advocacy implies making the child’s voice heard or represented. Advocacy asserts the need for greater focus and attention on children’s issues and in many situations have led to changes in laws and policies. There are different ways and strategies of advocacy. Communication skills is a critical component in advocacy related work. In advocacy and campaign, sustained attention on the issue, collaboration and creating a forum for dialogue and debate is important.

6. Conclusion

There is a wide and varied scope of social work intervention with children. Intervention is possible at micro and macro levels and across different settings. One can work directly with children, significant adults as well as advocating for necessary changes in policy and laws. Social work with children is a specialised area of work. It requires thorough knowledge about children, a rights-based attitude and approach towards children, and being able to plan and contextualise intervention which is relevant and promotes child well-being.

“Advocacy aims to change policy and legislation so that they will have a positive effect on Children's life. It also aims to change the way decision-making happens to make it more inclusive. This involves building the children's skills and confidence so that they can become effective advocates, Creating opportunities for civil society groups to take part in decision making, and addressing society's norms and attitudes relating to children. Advocacy is also, crucially, about making sure that policies designed to benefit children are put into practice”