

# Section 1

# Launch a Workstart Group

# What is a Workstart Group?

# 1.1

## What are the characteristics of groups?

A group can be described as a number of people who share a common interest and agree to work together to achieve a common goal. Members of a group will get to know each other well and have close interaction with each other.

## What is a Workstart Group?

It is group like the one described above, but one which functions as an informal association of people in a village or neighbourhood and it will have three particular characteristics.

It is:

- a **Savings Club**
- and a **Self Help Group** which is focused on **Income Generating Activity**



## A Workstart Group will also:-

- Be in the range of 10-20 people
- Have members sharing characteristics such as gender, circumstance or poverty
- Expect members to be bound by trust, mutual respect and affection
- Hold regular meetings with rules, regulations and have excellent record keeping
- Offer mutual help (all for one and one for all) as the guiding principle of the group
- Promote self help as a key principle rather than dependence on external help
- Focus members on the collective goal of improving their income
- Expect members to make small savings every month
- Open its own savings account with a financial institution
- Enable members to withdraw savings to start income generating activities
- Train members during meetings in micro trading and encourage problem solving
- Become an organisation capable of having a voice in the community
- Develop a good track record of management so it can access external support

# Why Start a Workstart Group?

## 1.2

### Unity is strength

One important reason why Workstart Groups are formed is because once united, even people from poor communities find they can break the barriers to their development. What are the benefits of belonging to a group? Perhaps achieving things not possible by someone working alone. Or being exposed to new opportunities unheard of before. Or learning from others in the group.

What contribution therefore do members of a Workstart Group make?

**COLLECTIVE ACTION**  
**UNITY and**  
**SELF-HELP**



Experience shows how people in rural or poor communities find themselves unable to access benefits from ongoing government programmes **due to the absence of collective action, unity and self-help.**

Instead people are cheated by dealers, have to pay bribes and get poor access to even basic services. They have insufficient working capital for managing an enterprise and lose wages due to meeting official requirements and barriers. They also lack the right approach and skills for managing an enterprise.

Programmes designed to help poor communities often fail because:-

- People are not being involved in planning and executing the programme
- People believe it is the responsibility of the government to look after poor people
- People use the resources for other projects
- People involved in the programme abuse the services being provided so it fails

Therefore programmes which don't have ownership, collective action, nor work together in unity and have self-help as guiding principles, will often fail to meet their objective of social and economic development.

**The key aim of any Workstart Group** is to begin a process of self directed development, in which local people and resources are developed and protected by the people themselves from within their own community.

# How to set up a Workstart Group

## 1.3

### Group Facilitator

A Facilitator will be someone wanting to set up and lead a new group who will benefit from meeting other local community leaders and residents, especially women, to gain insight and information about the neighbourhood. Conversations will need to be held to find out if there is any interest in forming a small group to support initiating income generating activities.



Holding focus group discussions with interested people is essential to explain the concept of a Workstart Group, its advantages and also the responsibilities members will have to agree to. Prospective members will need to be made aware that they must be willing to develop good interpersonal relationships.

### Membership Criteria

As the Workstart Group is to be a self-selected entity, formed on the basis of shared interests and affinity with each other, it is better to help the people in the interest group evolve their own criteria of selection. A wealth ranking exercise and social linkage tools might be useful for this.

Ask participants to do a wealth ranking exercise. The first step is to lay down the criteria. Sometimes, the list of poor people in a neighbourhood may not match with the criteria and in that case the criteria selected by villagers must be given preference. The criteria may revolve around the following:

CRITERIA (examples only)	POOR	NOT POOR
Type of House	No toilet, no tap water, no electricity	Has a toilet, has tap water, has electricity
Land	Has no land or has only very little land	Has enough land to meet all necessary expenditure
Work	Has low paid work with insufficient income. Cannot miss a day's work because family will go without food	Has a well paid job and enough time with family
Education	Self, spouse and children are uneducated; cannot afford to send children to school	Most family members have high school level education; can afford to pay for desired education
Health	Cannot meet medical expenses	Can comfortably meet medical expenses
Leisure	Has no TV, cannot go to the movies frequently.	Has TV, can have any type of entertainment desired

**After agreeing the criteria, you can categorise all households in the village in these two groups**

Now you can list some households categorised as poor and begin to work on creating a linkage diagram. The linkages could include:

- Households with the most frequent interaction
- Households which go to work together
- Households with whom they have no difficulty in sharing food
- Households which are not disliked
- Households which have a common skill

These linkages will give a basis for self-selection of group members. It must be remembered that this is not a single day's exercise, it may take several visits, so do not hurry this part of the process. The exercise will also enable people to engage thoughtfully about how the group will work.

After the membership is defined, prospective members should meet at a suitable community place, with the Leader present, to decide on a group name, its overall objectives and some appropriate activities.

In the next two or three meetings (at this stage the meetings will need to be held weekly, and this may be helpful for about a month) the group should frame its bye-laws, savings scheme, amounts to be saved, and thereafter frequency of meeting. The Group Leader and responsible officers, will also need to be appointed.

**“Coming together  
is a beginning;  
keeping together  
is progress;  
working together  
is success. ~  
Anonymous”**

# Rules for your Workstart Group

# 1.4

## Why your Workstart Group needs some Rules

Wherever people join together for a common objective, and particularly when financial transactions take place, there is a need to have rules written down. In democratic organisations, these rules must be agreed and understood by all the members and must be followed strictly. Any deviant behaviour must be discouraged through a set procedure. In order to make financial transactions transparent, proper accounts must be maintained. In the absence of these the organisation will disintegrate.



We are including in this section some general rules for discussion, under Do's and Don'ts, and in the next section, at 2.2 there

is a more detailed list of Member's Roles and Responsibilities. In the Appendices section, at A.3, you will find a basic Governing Document for use where it is helpful for groups to be more formally constituted. Ideally any type of regulatory document should be drafted, presented and agreed during the second meeting. It should be written in the local language and will have evolved through extensive discussion and consensus. Do not impose any rule difficult to follow, as all members need to understand the rules and sign the document.

Examples of the types of rules to be discussed, will include:-

- The Main Aims of the group (Why it exists. What it will do. How it will do this)
- Membership (Who can join? Who cannot? When and how can a member leave?)
- Meetings (When? Where? Quorum? How to deal with absentees. What will be discussed)
- Savings (Minimum amount per month. When and how withdrawal of savings is permitted)
- How to choose officers (Who? How? When to change them?)

### **The story of how one Group framed its Rules**

*Khanda village has a successful Group, which was formed in 2001 and has 20 members. They unanimously selected Narayana Devi as President and started saving Rs.20 per month. After discussions, they decided that those who absent themselves from monthly group meetings will have to pay a fine of Rs.5. It was also decided that every member will pay the agreed monthly saving at the meeting to be held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of every month. Late payment will invite a fine of Rs.2 per day.*



## SOME DO'S AND DON'TS

### DO

- Agree together on a suitable name for your group, eg the Osu Workstart Group
- Agree together the main aims of the group, eg saving, IGAs and business training, etc
- Agree together who should join and how many members will work best as a group
- Agree together how much people could manage to save each week
- Agree together how often to meet, where this will be and at what time
- Elect 3 Representatives as Chair, Treasurer and Secretary
- Keep good accurate records of Meetings held and all Decisions taken
- Record all Saving and Withdrawals in each member's Passbook
- Enable members to check the records, ask questions and make suggestions
- Deposit all money received and keep accurate records

### DON'T

- Join if you can't get to the meetings
- Join if you are unwilling to participate at meetings
- Join if you are unwilling to learn new skills
- Join if you are unwilling to serve and help others
- Join if you are unwilling to start a micro business or get a job
- Join if you are unwilling to save regularly

# Personal Questionnaire for Workstart Members

# 1.5

Member's Name:.....

Please give an honest score for each of the following 20 questions:

**0 = this is not me not at all to 10 = very confident this is me**

Questions	Score
1 I know myself well - my strengths and weaknesses	
2 I welcome change and new opportunities in life	
3 I always finish what I start	
4 I like meeting new people and get on well with them	
5 I like being creative in making or doing things	
6 I like learning from others with more experience	
7 I enjoy helping others	
8 I am not afraid of hard work and long hours	
9 I have a realistic 'common sense' approach to problems	
10 I am not afraid to make decisions, even if I make mistakes	
11 I can take criticism. I adjust, if necessary, but keep going	
12 When I know I am right I like to try and convince others	
13 I am in good health and generally keep myself fit	
14 I am enthusiastic and like to inspire others	
15 I can do many things at once and solve problems quickly	
16 I like to keep busy every day	
17 I am a good organizer and like planning what I do	
18 I like to achieve things, even when they seem difficult	
19 I will do whatever I can to make a success of my life	
20 I am patient with others when they disagree with me	
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>	
The higher your score the more <b>potential you have for starting your own business, and joining a Workstart Group helps you achieve this</b>	