

Cambodian Children's Trust Evaluation of Social Work Supervision

Background

Social work supervision is a critical function within social service organizations, ensuring both quality of services delivered and that frontline practitioners receive the practical and emotional support they require to undertake their work.

Given the infancy of social work practice in Cambodia, social service organizations have often sought external, expatriate professional supervision for local social workers. However, since early 2018 Cambodian Children's Trust (CCT) has moved towards a model of internal social work supervision, empowering local staff to undertake this function, and embedding responsibility for this within its organizational structure. Supervisors have received at least two different trainings, from FCF|REACT and Signs of Safety Practitioners and are competent in providing a supervisory relationship to their supervisees. Supervision happens in three forms on a monthly basis: individual supervision, group supervision and peer supervision.

Purpose of Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was to review internal social work supervision within CCT, specifically:

1. The extent to which practitioners believe that receiving supervision has contributed to the effectiveness of their own practice.
2. Whether there are any challenges, or areas for improvement, in providing supervision
3. Next steps for improving the provision of internal social work supervision within CCT.

It is further hoped that this evaluation will also contribute to, and benefit, wider social work practice in Cambodia.

Methodology

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. This was primarily done through a self-administered questionnaire with staff, and complemented by a literature review on social work supervision, with a focus on Cambodian-specific content.

The survey instrument, a self-administered questionnaire, was distributed to 42 staff and asked a series of scaling, multiple choice and open questions on experiences with the three forms of supervision. The purpose of the survey was explained to staff and they could choose whether or not to participate. Staff were given a two-week period to complete the survey and responses were confidential. In total, 34 staff completed the questionnaire, or 81% of the target population.

Data analysis was completed in excel. Scaling questions were aggregated into five different categories, multiple choice data was sorted to comprehend size or frequency and open questions were coded to identify patterns.

Limitations

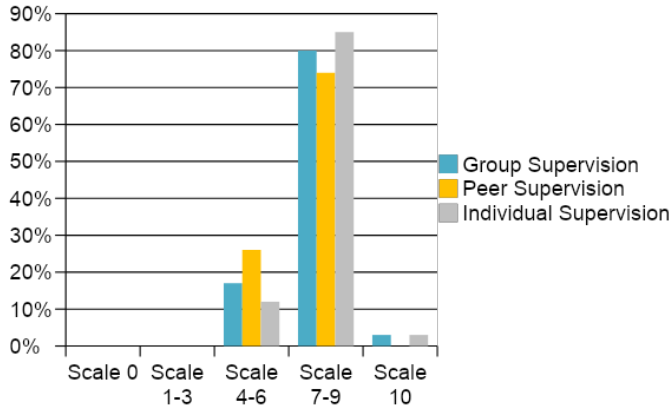
While it is hoped that this evaluation is of benefit to social work practice in Cambodia broadly, it is limited by the number of participants and the focus on practice within CCT. Further, there is little literature available on social work supervision in the Cambodian context which could have been used to further inform the literature review.

Due to resource constraints, the perspectives and satisfaction of service users and their relationship with their case managers was not able to be included in this specific study, but will be included in future programmatic evaluations.

Key Findings

Benefits of social work supervision to staff:

All respondents see social work supervision as beneficial to them in terms of their capacity building. On a scale of 0 (not useful at all) to 10 (very useful), on average respondents rated individual supervision highest at 7.85, with group supervision slightly lower at 7.50 and peer supervision at 6.97.



(Figure 1: How beneficial is social work supervision)

Respondents chose from multiple choice options as to how each of the three types of supervision helps them, with a majority of respondents believing that each option provided for the type of supervision had helped them. Nearly all respondents believed that individual supervision helped them most to address solutions to their challenges, while most felt that group supervision helped them with competencies in their practice. Most respondents also felt peer supervision helped them to see their work with families in context and the strengths of relationships the family has.

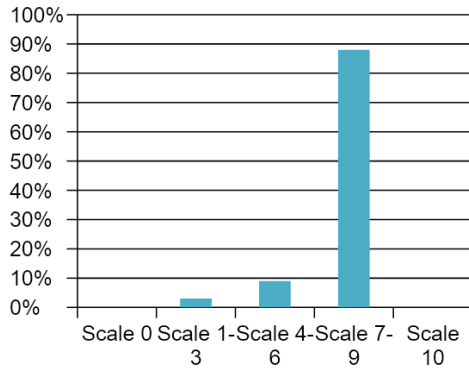
Group Supervision		Peer Supervision		Individual Supervision	
Develop positive questions to identify strengths and safety	88%	See how connected the family is to their network	79%	Address the solution to your challenges	94%
Determine what needs to happen next with the case	88%	See how well you have worked with the family	76%	Build up good supervisory relationship	82%
Differentiate between existing strengths and safety	86%	See how independent the family is	76%	Feel proud of your overall work	71%
Define meaningful danger statement	80%	Feel proud of your working relationship with the family	76%		
Define an attainable safety goal	74%	See how at risk the family really is	65%		
Distinguish harm and danger	71%				
Decrease your worries regarding the case	68%				

Respondents were also given an 'other' option as to how each type of supervision helps them. A few respondents noted that group supervision also helps them to share ideas and good practices with each other, as well as build their skills in facilitating group supervision. Similarly, a respondent also noted that peer supervision was beneficial for hearing the ideas of other colleagues for improving working relationships with families. One-fifth of respondents also noted an 'other' option for benefits of individual supervision, including the emotional support they receive from their manager, the ability to discuss things in more depth and being more confident to overcome challenges.

Respondents were asked an open question on how the three types of supervision could be improved to benefit them further, with the majority of respondents providing feedback on this. For group supervision, a number of respondents said they would like to learn more about signs of safety, while about one-third noted that they would like group supervision to continue. A couple of respondents each talked to different process improvements that could be made, including around respecting ground rules, participation of staff and discussion of more complex cases. For peer supervision, about one-fifth of respondents noted that they would like this type of supervision to continue, with a few also noting that they would like to see adjustments to the questionnaire used to match the MoSVY form. A couple of respondents each noted they would like to learn how to lead peer supervision and that they would like time to be respected so there was enough time to discuss cases. A number of individual responses were also noted, including also discussing risk factors in peer supervision, being able to raise more than one case per month, and conversely, ensuring only one case is raised per month and discussed in depth. For individual supervision, about one-quarter of respondents expressed that they would like to see it happen regularly on a monthly basis. A few respondents each noted that they would like to see the practice continue, and that they would like to see their manager provide more on-time support. There were also a number of individual responses, including having a clear agenda and objective for the session, receiving training on individual supervision to better understand the practice, that sessions should occur at least twice per month, and conversely, that they should only occur every two months.

Benefits of social work supervision to service users:

All respondents see social work supervision as beneficial to the children and families with whom they work. On a scale of 0 (not beneficial at all) to 10 (very beneficial), on average respondents rated this at 7.56, similar to the scaling response of social work supervision as being beneficial to them.



(Figure 2: How beneficial social work supervision is to clients)

Respondents chose from multiple choice options as to how individual supervision helps the children and families with whom they work with, with a majority of respondents believing that each option provided had benefitted service users.

Benefits of Social Work Supervision to Service Users	
The family can access service they need	88%
The family can trust the social workers even more	88%
Others have helped the family such as local authorities, partnering NGOs, and/or relatives	85%
The family are empowered	82%
The family can access service on time	68%

A couple of respondents also noted an 'other' option for how supervision benefits service users, including that it allows staff to better support clients to identify and work out solutions to problems themselves and to show empathy in the way they work with clients.

Recommendations

Overall, the evaluation found that internal social work supervision in CCT is perceived to be beneficial to both staff and service users. However, areas for further improvement have also been noted and two key next steps to address these are:

- *Training*: staff to receive training/ refresher training on signs of safety and appreciative inquiry to further improve strengths-based approaches to practice, as well as training on the process of group supervision.
- *Practice framework*: the framework of practice should be revised to ensure the questionnaire used for supervision matches the MoSVY forms. The supervision policy should also be finalized so that the quality of individual supervision can be guaranteed.

A number of recommendations are also made as to how this type of study could be improved in the future, including:

- Including the perspectives and satisfaction of service users, given that this is also reflective of the benefits of social work supervision.
- Undertaking a more in-depth, semi-structured survey which also focuses on the perceptions of staff regarding the process of each type of social work supervision.
- Using a quasi-experimental design for the study, which includes one group undertaking pre- and post-testing, to further prove the effectiveness of supervision.

In conclusion, all three forms of social work supervision in CCT promote a strengths-based approach to practice and supports staff to feel positive about their work, as well as better support the families and communities they are working with.