CHAPTER 5
SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION

The profession of social work is distinguished from anthropology, psychology, sociology, and other disciplines by its focus on induced change (Rosen & Proctor, 1978; Rosen, Proctor, & Staudt, 1999; Schilling, 1997). One has to keep in mind that the social work intervention has a distinction of being an attempt to induce and bring change in the lives of people for whom the intervention is planned. Furthermore, the source of knowledge for intervention is not only the experiences but the broad range of studies bearing on the problems induced change which are made use of by the social worker (Briar & Miller, 1971, pp. 173-174).

In the present study, the interventions suggested to address the issues of the families of disappeared persons who constitute the client system are based on the following aspects:

(i) Importance to the profession is very essential. The intervention planned for the client system should be in accordance with the purpose, values and ethics of the profession.

(ii) Client system should be engaged in any of the interventions to be done. The intervention should be capable of communicated to others i.e., it should be well described and clear to the client system as their involvement is a prime requisite.

(iii) It should make sense to a lay person, which means that all the stake holders of the intervention should be able to understand the linkage between intervention technique and their life experiences.

(iv) Research is the key. It should rest on an empirical foundation, which means that it should be based on facts and observations.

Acknowledging the diverse and varied nature of problems of the client system and the wide variety of practice settings and types of clients it is not possible to
identify a single social work practice framework that is superior to all. It is important that whatever the practice framework it should be based on social work values and generate success (Sheafor, Horejsi & Horejsi, 1994, pp.47-48 ). The present study shows that, the disappearance of a family member has a multi dimensional impact on the family members which include economical, health and social, and any social work intervention which is proposed to be done with the families should be able to take into account the various systems within the social environment of the families which have a direct or indirect bearing on the coping ability of the families of disappeared persons.

5.1 GENERALIST PERSPECTIVE

The social worker is expected to see a problem, even a difficult problem, and try to help people solve it. They must prepare themselves to help people with individualized problems on one hand and very broad problems that affect the whole organization and communities on the other (Krist-Ashman, Karen, & Hull, 1998, p. 4).

It is very important for a social worker to understand that before any practice framework is suggested to guide to intervention activities, the practice framework should be able to address both the personal and environmental issues of the client system. In the present study the Generalist based social work intervention is proposed, keeping in view the nature and the kind of impact on the families of the disappeared persons, as Generalist framework social work based intervention provides a better understanding and addressing of personal and collective issues of the client system and works with a variety of human systems-societies, communities, neighbourhoods, complex organizations, formal groups, informal groups, families and individuals to create change which maximizes social functioning (Miley, O’Melia & Dubios, 1995, p.10). With its wide scope for intervention at various levels, the Generalist framework based social work intervention, primarily seeks promotion, restoration, maintenance and enhancement of the social functioning of the individuals, families, groups, organisations and communities by helping them to accomplish tasks, prevent and
alleviate distress and use resources. The various issues pertaining to the various policies and programmes can also be addressed as it aims at planning, formulation and implementation of social policies, services and programmes needed to meet basic human needs and support the human capacities. In the present study the need for social advocacy or social action has also been greatly felt by the researcher, therefore the Generalist framework based intervention becomes appropriate as it also calls for the pursuit of policies, services, resources, and programmes through organisational or administrative advocacy and social or political action, to empower groups at risk and to promote social and economic justice, and lastly the perspectives recognition to the fact that there is a continual interaction of the systems as it also recognised the system theory (Council on Social work education, 1995, p.135).

Thus keeping in view the issues and requirement of the client system reflected by the present study and the purpose of Generalist based intervention, it is found that there is great degree of equality between what is needed for the client system and the purpose of generalist social work based intervention. It is proposed to use the Generalist framework based social work intervention which because of its multilevel approach can be of great use.

The Generalist framework allows a broad range of potential interventions. The intervention suggested can primarily be divide under three areas which include consulting with client system regarding the resolution of problems, managing the resources of client system and the social environment, and offering information to clients system about their environment. Thus, the intervention areas fall within three broad sections viz, consultancy, resource management and Education (Dubious & Miley, 1999, p. 240) within t three levels viz, micro, mid and macro levels within these broad sections employing various practice strategies.

5.1.1 Consultancy

The social worker is required to initiate change in the client system by clarifying client issues, discovering options and developing plans of action. It is very
important for the social worker to acknowledge that the knowledge, skills, values are based on their personal, organisational and community life experiences. Already it is established that the client system under the present study is struggling with low self esteem and hopelessness, the client system should not be treated negatively as it can damage the client systems self respect and confidence. Furthermore, there should be a balanced focus on weaknesses and pathologies of the client system with already impaired self esteem, so that the feeling of hope and help in the client system is encouraged and developed.

Meanwhile the partnership between the client system and social worker holds the key as it is this recognition of partnerships that can help the worker to build on client systems strength and potential for change which needs to be brought not only at one micro level intervention but mid and macro level as level. (Hepworth, Rooney & Larsen, 1997). Therefore, the intervention at three levels of Micro, Mid and Macro under the consultancy function allows the social worker to address personal, family, organizational, community, or societal problems of the client system which is discussed hereafter:

5.1.2 Consultancy at Micro level

The primary focus of intervention at this level should be the social functioning of the client system. At micro level, the social worker can play an enabler role whereby intervention done should be aimed at to resolve challenges in social functioning and a prime strategy should actually to find solution to the problems faced by the client system. At this level counselling of the client system as a strategy can also can be taken into account. The counselling helps the social worker to identify the problem and discover the solutions. The social worker along with clients can create changes by refining behaviour, altering pattern of relationships, and modifying factors in the social and physical environment. The idea is to improve the social functioning of the client system by helping them to understand their attitudes and feelings modify behaviours, and learn to cope with problematic situations. The client’s situation must be thoroughly understood and their motivation, capacities, and opportunities for
change assessed. This involves organising the information in ways that promote an understanding of both the client and the social environment in order to produce a workable action plan. This intervention complements the professional objective of helping people identify their potentials and competencies and develop ability to solve problems and cope with (Working statement, 1981). It is very important during the course of working with the client, the social worker should be able to identify the needs of the clients and clarify their situations (Brieland, Costin & Atherton, 1985). Social worker can use varying approaches in order to provide the conditions necessary for the clients to achieve their purposes, meet life challenges, engage in their natural life development process and carry out their tasks (Maluccio, 1981, p. 19).

In order to have effective intervention the social worker needs to have a knowledge of human behaviour and an understanding of how the social environment impacts on people, an ability to assess clients needs and functioning and to know the ability to guide clients through the change process. Social worker has to have a belief that the condition of change lie within the client and their interaction with the social system. As an enabler the social worker has to examine and provide the client system alternative and evaluate potential outcomes, rather than directing the client system to a single option.

Another technique with this can be the formation of groups of clients which helps the members share their experiences and feelings and discover that others experiences similar feelings and difficulties. It is obvious that often in their discussions group members discover ideas for solutions. By facilitating the group process the social worker enables the members to resolve their difficulties.

5.1.3 Consultancy at Meso Level

Consultancy at mid level with client system plays a very important part as it is seen that the families of the disappeared persons find themselves attached to the group involving many other families and whose interactions with various other institutions and structures outside the group has a direct bearing on their own well being and
perception of problem. At this level the social worker has to be a facilitator whereby his/her intervention has to be primarily with formal groups, organisations or bureaucratic structures to develop them to be more effective in their functioning and their response towards the client system. The present study shows that the families have been making all efforts which are required to initiate a process of finding the disappeared persons but they have not been able to get the desired response from the institutions or formal groups concerned with the issue of searching or exploring the whereabouts of the disappeared. At this level the social worker is required to be more concerned with the inefficiencies in terms of lack of awareness about laws, programmes and policies etc. in the formal groups or organisations who are encountering problem to develop solutions. The social worker can clarify mutual expectations and perspectives (Ingalls, 1973). As a facilitator the social worker can support helpful behaviours of the group members, model useful behaviours, ask appropriate questions, or provide appropriate observations and feeling about the group. They can teach other group members about group process and functioning (Johnson, 1995, p.210). It is very important for the social worker to maintain that the members have stabilized the change as appropriate to them and are taking maximum out of it. With an objective of increasing the effectiveness of programmes and services the social worker at this level of intervention can be instrumental in shaping the organisational policies by taking various strategies of social work practice to ensure that they are effective. This can be achieved by making organisations able to prioritize the issues. One should keep in mind that at this level of intervention the focus is usually the organisation change rather than the individual change. However it is to be initiated as per the individual need.

5.1.4 Consultancy at Macro level

The families of disappeared persons are the part and parcel of the social fabric and in no case can remain in isolation from their immediate societies. The issues of client system under the present study are very much in need of community intervention as the response of the community has a great bearing on their ability to
solve problems. The community can be made responsible only if it is able to identify its resources and acknowledge its importance in addressing the problems of client system. The importance of community and the societal structures have been always acknowledged by the social work profession. It is this area in which social worker can play a very vital role in addressing the issues of the client system. The working with communities can help the social worker to assess unmet needs of the client system and to explore and identify the needs of the client system and what are the barriers which have made the client system unable to meet their respective needs. When a social worker intervenes at a macro level he is expected to set goals, develop policies, and initiate programmes which call for a planner role of a social worker. It can also include the utilization of research activities and planning on part of the social worker. The intervention involves the social worker to assist communities in planning to resolve community problems and provide health and human services which are most required while intervening with the families of disappeared persons.

According to Brieland, Costin and Artherto (1985) “Planners and organisers need to understand the social fabric of society, community, sociology, social problems, community psychology, social planning and social policy” (p.163). Using specialized skills the social workers can involve the community leaders in addressing the needs and developing the community resources. The intervention can involve coordinating services, developing programmes, evaluating policies effectiveness and advocating social welfare reforms. Research techniques can be used to do need assessment and community profile to help them develop the community understanding and discover potential solutions, but it is must for a social worker to take research and analysis rationally and in a futuristic way. The social worker along with client system to assess both resources available and constraints in order to define the scope for planning, which if properly done can achieve comprehensive changes through systematic reforms.
5.1.5 Resource Management

It is another function which can be performed by the social worker for intervention with the client system. It is observed that at times client system seeks social work services when it is not able to find within their personal reservoir or in their formal networks of social support, the required resources are important for their wellbeing. In such situations social workers can help client system access resources, coordinate the delivery of services, and initiate new policies and programmes which form the part of resource management activity. The social worker in the present study is required more to do with coordinating, systematizing and integrating resources rather than controlling or directing client systems decisions and choices. The social worker should ensure that the collaboration of client system is there as being actively involved in decision making which in turn empowers clients to access and utilize the resources more effectively. The resources may involve free legal aid, access to economic support programme or any other service required to the client system. It needs to be understood that for the client system the problems and needs emerge out of interaction between client and his environment and at the same time it is also important to acknowledge the fact that it is this environment that has a reservoir of solutions (Siporin, 1975). The client system in the present study is found to be having a number of forces which are possible actors of furthering the stress, therefore personal, interpersonal, community and societal resource systems mediate stress. The resource systems enhance client’s social functioning and promote their full participation in the society.

The intervention in terms of Resource Management call for action at Micro, Mid and macro level systems. At micro system level the social worker can use the case management strategy to carry out their broker and advocate role. Similarly at midlevel, the social worker can play a mediator or convener role to develop a network of social service delivery systems. While at macro-level as mobilizes to activate change in the society by initiating a process which promotes the structural and institutional changes in socio political arena and lastly the catalyst role to collaborate.
and coordinate with the members of the social work community to work effectively as a catalyst to eliminate oppression and injustice.

Before we discuss the various interventions at the above mentioned three system levels it is important to understand that the resources are located in the people, in interaction with others and within societal institutions. Personal resources are qualities within individuals such as resiliency capabilities, sense of worth, hopefulness, self-esteem, intellectual abilities, motivation for change, perseverance, tenacity, courage and life experiences (Siporin 1975; Lawton, 1980). Similarly interpersonal resources encompass support systems that emerge from natural helping networks such as family members, friends, neighbours and co-workers. Societal resources constitute the responses of societal institutions that promote the well being of societal members.

5.1.6 Resource Management at Micro level

Intervention at this level demands a social worker to perform a role of broker or advocate which involves linking the client with the available resources or can serve as the intermediaries to help client. Coordination of services required by the client system needs to be coordinated effectively. The social worker can make use of case management techniques to coordinate the multiple resources. The social worker is required to work as a collaborator with clients to access and understand the situation of the client, in addition to this the social worker has to provide a range of resources to the client to choose from. Lastly it is also required on part of the social worker to link the client with other agencies who deliver services for the issues which a client is encountering. According to Grinell, Kyte, and Bostwick (1981) the social worker at this level needs to construct the up to date inventory of formal and informal resources available and maintain a working relationship with key professionals in the community who can be of great help to the client system. The social worker needs to empower the client by informing them about the ways to access and approach other professionals and service agencies so that they enhance the clients self respect rather than leaving them feeling defeated or degraded. It is also necessary to includes adding
to their information about how to find resources that will be useful in making good
decisions and resources that will be useful in implementing them. The client system is
also required to inform about what contributes to healthy bodily and psychological

5.1.7 Resource management at Meso level

As a convener and mediator, intervention, of social worker assumes a very
important role as a professional who mediates between the representatives of the
groups or organisations when they gather to identify common problems, formulate
goals, discuss potential solutions, mobilize resources and implement and evaluate
plans of action. It also requires a social worker to make use of networking strategies
to coordinate and develop services. Social worker need to create linkages between
systems, improve interaction among different organisations and mobilize
organisational resources. As the issues of the client system in the present study are
varied and a number of agencies and organisations are to be involved, the social
worker has to be able to work with interdisciplinary teams and inter agency ventures.

5.1.8 Resource management Macro Level

Intervention involving the role of activist by a social worker demands that
social worker has to identify the key social and economical and political leaders of the
community or society to initiate social change. In the process, it is very important to
explore, analyse and asses the various blockade which are social, economical and
political in nature and are affecting the ability of the client system to be ready for
change. The social worker can make use of strategies of social action or social
advocacy to promote social justice by influencing the allocation of resources,
lobbying for legislative changes and initiating court actions. The intervention should
be focussed on developing the public consciousness about the issues of the client
system. To change the adverse conditions of the client system they need to mobilise
the available resources (Barker,1995).The strategy which can be used involves a set of
actions like improving the communication between the various stake holder, help
agencies and client system combine their resources, developing most close network of client systems, clarifying goals and steps to achieve them and devising plans to gain more and more support. The basic idea is to mobilize the public opinion in favour of the desired objectives. The social worker should have some characteristics to achieve this objective which according to O'Connell (1978) are:

(i) Focus on worthy cause.
(ii) Feel a genuine commitment to the cause.
(iii) Sustain their focus.
(iv) Value activism as an effective way to create social change.
(v) Remain tenacious, as social change is known to require stamina.
(vi) Understand the organisational structures of government bureaucracy and social service agencies.
(vii) Develop a base support and influence.
(viii) Maintain independence from other pressure groups.

Therefore this intervention can be helpful in removing the barriers that prevent the client system from exercising their rights or receiving the benefits and using the resources they need (McPheeters, 1971, p.18).

5.1.9 Education

This function of social work holds a very high degree of requirement while dealing with the families of disappeared persons, who are usually not aware and informed about the various issues and rights they are entitled to. This involves a flow and exchange of information between the social worker and the client system. The function is primarily focused on the preventive strategies to be adopted before the occurrence of any social problem (Caplan, 1964).
The intervention within this function can be at all the three levels of system. At micro level the social worker has to assume a role of a teacher to develop the information and knowledge base of client system. At mid level, social worker has to be a trainer to facilitate the staff development i.e., developing the knowledge and competence of the personnel working with the issue of disappearance so that they become more responsive to the needs and issues of the families of disappeared persons. And finally at the macro level the social worker needs to develop the knowledge base of general public through outreach role.

5.1.10 Teacher at Micro level

The intervention involves the development of client’s skills and information by using learning strategies. This will empower the client system as it provides effective mastery of life skills, role performance and control over one’s life (Freud, 1987). The social worker should have regular conferences, formalized instructional settings or experimental exercises such as role plays which will help the worker to exchange the information with the client system. The objective is to develop the client’s interpersonal effectiveness, ability to access resources and take informed decisions. The client system should be given an opportunity to find out the linkage between social policy and their situations by informing and educating them, this will initiate a process of discussion within a client system which in turn develop the client system to affect policy issues individually and collectively.

5.3.3 Trainer at Meso level

As the title itself suggests that it involves the strategies of providing trainings to the mid level system such as formal groups and organisations. The social worker can organise and provide trainings through workshops, staff development, in service experience and other forms of continuing education. The social worker can make presentations, conduct public forums and facilitate workshop sessions and serve as panelist.
5.1.11 Outreach role at Macro level

The first and foremost thing which needs to be done if there is a need to have a big shift in any social policy or issue is the development of public opinion for the same. When social worker does outreach role it helps him/her to educate the citizen about the social issues, injustice and social services. Use of various media can be made including public relation activities. This intervention can help in increasing the awareness of citizen of problems in a wide variety of areas which are also encountered by the client system. The areas can be health care, disease, stress, and family related issues which have been found to be among the families of disappeared persons. Providing information about the services available make client system aces them easily. The strategy which can be used is distributing posters and leaflets, conducting mass mailing, staffing information booths and programmes and arranging speaking engagements, public service announcements, print media, films and radio and television programmes,

5.2 Social Support System

Environment in which the individual lives has a great bearing on the social functioning and well being of the individual. When a thorough look is made on the impact of disappearance on the families of disappeared persons it is found that social environment has often been perceived as one of the greatest influence on their well being by affecting their social functioning and social roles. In determining the level of social functioning of the client system under the present study Social Support System (SSS) can play a major role. It has been established that there are some vital needs that can be met only through the environment. The deficiencies in the SSSs which have a direct impact on the people they are available to. Mobilizing these SSSs has to be given a special emphasis in order to provide the remedies to the varied problems of client system.

As it is established that the families are having a high level of psychological impact and are constantly in a state of stress. It is maintained that stress because of
certain problem can lead persons and families to serious breakdown of functioning. Moreover, the severity of stress may result in temporary or permanent disruption of major source of social support (Hepworth & Larsen, 1993). It has been established that loss of important social support through exit events like dead, or leaving homes can initiate the suicidal attempts in the client system. The support systems SSSs tends to buffer the impact of these exit events (Slater & Depue, 1981). It is thus very apparent that presence of SSSs tends to reduce the impact of stressful situations and facilitates the successful adaptation. Thus establishment of SSSs represent a vital and very significant resource that practitioners should consider as they asses problem of the persons living in the stressful situations. The intervention by social worker should initiate with the process of identifying and taping the dormant SSSs and mobilize new SSSs in assisting clients to cope with life stress.

Before considering the SSSs for the client system it is very important to clarify the vital needs of the client system that are met through SSSs in this direction on the basis of list developed by (Weiss, 1974) and by (Hepworth & Larsen, 1993) the following vital needs are proposed by the researcher that are met through SSSs:

(i) **Attachment** is a very essential requirement as families usually feel isolated and insecure about their future. Close affectionate relationships and intra and inter family bonds can help in develop a sense of security and belonging.

(ii) **Social integration** makes families feel being part of the social system, thereby helping them to cope with social isolation. The importance of integration of families with the other ones having the same problems and issues plays a vital role in mainstreaming of such families. This can be furthered by establishment of network of families that share interests and values. The membership in the network is vital for the families.

(iii) **Physical care** is another aspect that can addressed, as this study shows that a large number of families are having multiple health problems and many of them are not in a position to take care of their illness due to incapacity, or severe disability.
(iv) Validation of personal worth (which promotes self esteem), is also a very important aspect that can be taken care of by the SSSs. This can be provided by families and colleagues.

(v) A sense of reliable alliance, The families have an assurance that they have like them other families in an alliance which is reliable and trustworthy.

(vi) The families have a financial, educational and childcare needs. These can also be addressed by SSSs involving networking with various social service delivery organisations and state as well. The families can be provided with Guidance, childcare, financial aid and other aid in coping with difficulties that arise.

One of the very important issue that has come up in this study is the psychological impact on the families. Such families lack coping skill essential to maintain themselves in the community, thus requiring the social work practitioners to mobilize resources including the SSSs. In such situations social work practitioners can serve this client system as case managers (Harris & Bergman, 1987).

5.3 Case Management

Social work is a profession of varied dimensions. Social workers are uniquely qualified to serve as case managers by reason of their knowledge of community resources, their skill in communication, advocacy and the purpose and objectives of the profession. As serving as case managers thus is consonant with the spirit of social work (Hepworth & Larsen, 1993, p.489).

As far as the families of the disappeared persons are in extensive need of case management as the families require extensive services and resources which include services of health care, mental health, rehabilitation, education, housing employment and other related services. In this situation the social worker has to perform the role of a case manager. The case management as an intervention requires a social worker to arrange meetings with or otherwise communicate with other agencies to identify the
needed resources. There is a responsibility on the social worker to plan and devising the serves delivery systems in a systematic and timely manner.

The work of case manager involves the interface between clients and their environment. Keeping in view the condition and the position of the client system under the present study the need for case management emerges out of the fact that the client system is not in a position to meet his needs because of the inability of client system to negotiate the complex and uncoordinated human service delivery systems (Austin, 1990). The reason could be either the agencies were not providing the services or the clients were not able to make their needs known. The clients may lack the physical mobility, knowledge of resources, experience, maturity, verbal; skills, or assertiveness required to avail themselves of needed resources. The inability to meet the vital needs lands the client system in a state of disfunctionality (McCreath, 1984, pp.436-441; Ely, 1985, pp.5-10). It can be said that the social worker is actually performing the linkage functions which involves the extensive knowledge of the needs of the families of disappeared persons and the relevant and available community resources and importantly the Governmental and Non Governmental programmes for their rehabilitation and welfare. It is pertinent to mention here that in case of non availability of the resources the social worker or case manager has to perform the role of a resource developer.

The case management involves social work practitioner to provide services to individuals and families with complex, multiple problems or disabilities. Barker (1995) has explained case management as a “procedure to plan, seek, and monitor services from different social agencies and staff on behalf of the client” (p.33). Usually social worker coordinates the services, advocates for the client and sometimes controls resources and purchase services for the client. Case management also involves the monitoring of progress of a client whose needs require the services of several professionals, agencies, healthcare facilities and human service programmes. The purpose of the case management is to assist the clients to receive the services they need by linking client to both formal and informal service networks available
outside and within the community and then to follow up to ensure that the client has actually received the services required. NASW (1992, September) described the case management intervention “as a method of providing services whereby a professional social worker assess the needs of the client and the family, when appropriate, and arranges, coordinates, monitors, evaluates and advocates for a package of multiple services to meet the specific client’s complex needs”(p.7). The case management with the families of disappeared can be either as proposed by Rothman or Greene.

According to the Rothman (1992, p.3) case management actually involves two central functions:

1. Providing **individualized advice**, counselling and therapy to clients in community.

2. **Linking clients to needed services** and supports in community agencies and informal helping networks. The present study proposes the Greene’s (1992, p.3) process of case management with the families of disappeared persons.

The following are the key features provided by Greene (1992) for the case management intervention:

(i) Is a process which is based on trusting and enabling client-social worker relationship.

(ii) Utilizes the social work dual focus of understanding the person in the environment in working with client.

(iii) Aims to ensure a continuum of care to clients with complex, multiple problems and disabilities.

(iv) Attempts to intervene clinically to ameliorate the emotional problems accompanying illness or loss of function.

(v) Utilizes the social work skills of brokering and advocacy as a boundary-spanning approach to service delivery.
(vi) Target clients who require a range of community-based or long term care services, encompassing economic, health/medical, social and personal care needs.

(vii) Requires the use of assessment of the client’s functional capacity and support network in determining the level of care.

(viii) Aims to provide services in the least restrictive environment.

(ix) Affirms the traditional social work value of self determination and the worth and dignity of the individual and the concept of mutual responsibility in decision making.

The intervention on the key features proposed by the Greene can be done involving the following practices with the families of the disappeared who should be able to utilize the available resources.

**Client identification and outreach**

Working with families of the disappeared persons is the key to a successful intervention. In this initial stage of the case management process, consultation with the families provides information on the potential barriers and obstacles in their access to services and their utilizations. However at the community or macro level, the case manager can provide the inputs into the various policies and programmes which will in turn help in defining the scope and shape of the services to be provided to the client system.

**Individual and Family Assessment and Diagnosis**

The case manager can use systematic data gathering skills to seek answers to the critical questions about the needed improvements in the balance within the family, and the relevant environment. This also helps in assessing the service available and any deficiency in them.
**Planning and Resource identification**

One of the very important aspect and a very critical intervention forming a part of case management process is to mobilize the clients problem solving capacity to develop jointly a care plan that is workable. Similarly, negotiations which require contracting skills can also be put to use with families and other providers concerning goals and expectations which is necessary before any realistic plan is determined.

However at the service level, the case manager should search extensively the available and appropriate resources keeping in view the cultural sensitivity and which are relevant to the client needs. Another advantage of this aspect is that it helps in identifying the gaps in various resources.

**Linking clients to needed resources**

At this stage accessing, acquiring and even creating the needed resources for the client system is essential and central to the intervention process. The case manager should address any of the issues and specific concerns or perceived obstacles of the client system.

**Service Implementation and Coordination**

This part requires the case manager to draw upon advanced clinical skills with the client system to assess client throughout the process of usage of the services to reach desired goals. The case manager can provide the practical assistance to the client. The client may put requests which may be quite distinct before the case manager to which he has to address accordingly.

**Monitoring service delivery**

This also has a significant value in terms of needs and perception of the client system regarding the available services and programmes for them. This study found that there is great trust deficit and unawareness about the schemes and policies of the state among the families of the disappeared. In this process the case manager shall
ensure that the system available is accountable to the client and that the client meets the agreed upon expectations. The main task of the case manager would be to work in such a way that the process goes as it should and reports and intervenes as per needs.

**Advocacy to obtain Services**

The main focus of this process is the ensuring of implementation of planned strategy to ensure that power structure is responding to the specific services or resources for clients system.

**Evaluation**

This holds a great importance as far as the process is concerned. It involves the direct engagement of case manager. The case manager should evaluate the quality, appropriateness and effectiveness of the case management services which are provided to the client at two levels. The first being at the client level and the other at the service delivery level. Putting importance to the case management as an effective intervention strategy the case managers can also perform following functions as proposed by Rothmans (1991) with families of the disappeared persons.

**Intra-agency coordination**

The Case manager needs to develop the effective strategy to enhance the linkage among different agencies involved in the process of addressing the problems of the families of disappeared. As it has been seen that only a couple of non-governmental organisations are working for the issues and rights of the families of disappeared persons but a good networking with other NGOs can be a very good practice in utilizing their resources both in terms in human and material aspect. This requires policies or agreements to be formulated to develop mutual trust and make referrals, this will help the case manager to identify the key persons with whom efforts to build working relationships can bear good results and also enables the case worker to proceed with his intervention smoothly.
Counselling

This is another function of the case managers which can be put to use as an effective intervention strategy. In counselling, the case manager can be limited to providing information and giving advice. However, the case manager is not at all involved in identifying and exploring the psyche of the clients and is also not to be providing any therapeutic treatment, Rather it will include problem solving, reality testing, socialization skills, and practical help in areas like, housing, employment, parenting.

Therapy

This function has its value mostly in the mental health settings. The case manager while employing this function can assist the clients in coping with daily problems of living. Keeping in view the issues and problems faced by the families of disappeared. This function needs a case manager to focus on the present rather than on the past issues. Another factor which needs to be taken care of while performing this function is that the families/Client system should often be involved to reinforce or maintained desired changes (Rothman, 1991, pp.521-528).

5.4 Advocacy

Advocacy has assumed a great level of acceptance in the present global scenario. The profession of social work has promptly adapted itself to the requirement and necessities of this very important strategy. The act of advocacy has a tremendous scope of helping the client system which has been neglected by anyways from receiving various services and amenities that are being with held unfairly. The present study has strongly highlighted the various issues and concerns of the client system which it could not address on its own, for such issues the advocacy can play a very important role.

Advocacy is defined as a process of working with and/or on behalf of clients to obtain services or resources for the client system that would not otherwise be
provided and to modify various policies, schemes, programmes, procedures, practices that adversely affect the client system and lastly it involves the promotion of new legislations or policies that will result in the availability of needed resources and services (Hepworth & Larsen, 1993, p. 503). While addressing the issues of families of disappeared persons, advocacy as an intervention has a great scope as it involves all the aspect that are needed to be taken into consideration while addressing the problems of families as most of them are not able to negotiate with the varied needs and resources that are to be addressed by the external institutions and the fact is that they don’t have any control over them. Theorists like Gilbert and Specth (1976) have identified two types of advocacies one they refer as case advocacy and the other is class advocacy. The type of advocacy which involves the social worker working with and on behalf of the individuals or families so as to assure that they are in receipt of services and benefits to which they are entitled and receive them in a dignified manner is a case advocacy. The class advocacy has a wider scope and involves the social worker to promote and induce changes in policies, practices, or laws that influence all persons in a specific class or group. Often this type of advocacy is referred to as social action. In the context of present study and the issues involved which demand social work intervention both type of advocacies can be employed as the client system has a plethora of problems which require the integration of both types.

The social worker while advocating for the client system needs to understand the importance of target system of advocacy which may include, individuals, agencies, public officials, courts, legislatures and divisions of government. The tactics should also vary as per the targets of advocacy which requires a thorough understanding of organisations structure and working and also the sound understanding of various policies (Rothman, 1991). It is also important that social workers should be able to understand whether the context and situations allow for advocacy or not and what is to be advocated and the strategy to be adopted (Sosin & Caulum, 1983). Therefore, this hold a very important place in the context of any place
where the armed conflict has been going on, as the political situation might not allow for this action. Advocacy needs the full trust and faith of client system on the social worker who is perform the role of an advocate for it. While considering advocacy interventions it is very important that the social workers should strictly observe the clients right to self determination. If client system does not wish to assert their rights, social worker should respect their wishes. Similarly when the social worker is implementing the advocacy actions he/she should bear in mind that it involves a certain amount of strain and tension which can have negative impact on the intervention. Social worker should discuss the possible outcomes and leaving the final decision to the client. In case of client system under in the present study which is very much prone to stress and other socio-economic burden the social worker should assess the situation and check whether it justifies the assertive action or not.

5.4.1 Techniques of Advocacy and Social action

Social worker while intervening with the client system can have a number of advocacy techniques, but the real challenge is to identify and decide which technique should be employed as it depends on the issues and problems of the client system. Another factor which should be borne in mind is the political climate and wishes of the families or client system. In case of the client system in the present study the following techniques proposed by Hepworth and Larsen (1993, pp.505-507) can be used by the social worker:

Conferring with other agencies

This technique is usually employed when there is situation of denial of resources or dehumanizing treatment by other agency. Under this techniques the social worker can hold case conferences with the staff persons or with the administrators to present the grievances in a prudent and dignified manner. The social worker should always accompany a client with him/her so as to ensure that whatever you are putting forward is authenticate and has a full support of client. This way client also learns to deal head-on with such situation. While in the process of advocacy if it
is found that the other party is indifferent or otherwise unwilling to take appropriate action to address the issues of the client system, a notice informing the agency about your intentions of pursuing the grievance further by contacting higher authorities or initiating other vigorous measures should be served.

**Appeals to Review Boards**

It is another technique which at times can be very fruitful in seeking the redressal of the problems of the client system. The social worker can appeal in case there is a proof of unjustly denying the client beneficial services, as often successful appeals result in changes in procedures and policies. But it is to be kept in mind that appeals are usually made to the agencies and government bodies which have procedure for appeal.

**Initiating legal action**

This technique has a very wide scope in our country which has strong judicial and legislative basis. The social worker can file a legal suit as an appropriate alternative when the rights of the client system are violated and other interventions fail to achieve redress. It has been often found that clients lack resources as well as will to pursue their demands legally. In this situation the inability of the client to hire a private lawyer or other resources can be addressed through the networking with various social service proving agencies which also provide legal aid and their services can be made use of.

**Forming Inter-agency committees**

This technique makes use of the networking technique used in various social work interventions. This technique can be employed when individual agencies or institutions fail in bringing the desired changes in the situation of client system. The social worker can coordinate with various agencies and pool their resources and can make effort to attack the issues which need immediate focus. Committees of these agencies can plan collective actions directed towards modification of the practices which increase the gaps in the services and the accessibility of the client system.
Providing expert testimony

This techniques call for a strong and powerful force by speaking forcibly about clients problems and needs in political and public arena by the social worker in influencing the public policies and procedures in favour of client system.

Gathering information through studies and surveys

It is one of the basic and fundamental techniques which should be employed with client system. The social worker should try to provide concrete data to support their position. Keeping in view the non availability of concrete information about the client system under consideration in this research study, conducting research studies, reviewing literature and doing surveys can equip social workers with concrete data and strong foundation to put forth their point of view. This will also help social worker to respond and penetrate hostile questions while in direct contact with public officials and legislatures.

Educating relevant segments of the Community

Often it is found that the worst enemy of any to developing progressive policies and programmes is ignorance of the client system. The participation of client system in any intervention is essential as it provide a sense of involvement and belongingness to them. This not only fosters decision making in them but also helps them to be responsible and aware about any outcome of the intervention. The social worker can use all forms of media including print campaigns, telephones, televisions, organise panel discussions and national and international conventions and speeches.

Contacting Public officials and legislators

This technique can be also used to promote needed policies and programmes for the client system. Social worker may contact legislatures and public officials directly or may appear at committee meetings to present information to the legislatures so that they are able to take informed judgements. A very important factor
that a social worker needs to take into consideration is that he/she should be knowledgeable about the influence that various interest groups have on the policy makers as Smith (1979) points out that it is worthwhile to acknowledge that “the provision of technical and political information is a significant influence to which the legislators respond in the political process” (p.235).

**Forming agency coalitions**

In this technique the main objective is to identify the agencies which are committed to the specific objective. The social worker achieves two fold advantages, firstly, it has a strong impact on the decision makers as a large number of agencies are involved in a united front and secondly the coalition of agencies which posses a same concern is less vulnerable to any attack while a single organisation can be easily targeted. Under this techniques the researcher recommends that more organisations/agencies should take up the issue of disappearances.

**Organizing Client groups**

This intervention involves the formation of action groups for social change that consists of members of the client system. The social worker within any agency is required to initiate the formation of groups, encourage and stimulates them to take action and also serve as a consultant in assisting these groups to obtain information, gain access to selected people and initiate a collective action. This organisation of client groups has a very important role when we talk of families of disappeared persons as they usually find themselves impotent from a political point of view.

**Developing Petitions**

This intervention call for a concentrated effort on part of the social worker to continuously make every effort to call attention of the decision makers to an issue and also exert pressure for accountability on a public official by expressing the voice of a constituency.
Making Persistent demands

This intervention technique tests the patients of the social worker. The social worker using this technique requires to go beyond the usual process of appealing. In this technique the social worker bombards the officials with continuous letters and telephone calls. Although it should be take into account that the continuous approach should not come in the purview of harassment.

5.5 Crisis Intervention Approach

The purpose of the crises intervention approach is to address the special needs and concerns of a client in an acute, psychological crisis. The intervention is applicable whenever the functioning of an individual or family has been suddenly or unexpectedly impacted by some personal loss or tragedy. It is to be used during the first four to six weeks period following the event that precipitated the crisis. With an emphasis on providing a focussed and time limited intervention to the client system who is not able to function because of a personal crisis (Sheafor, Horejsi, & Horejsi, 1994, p.69). Parad and Parad (1990) explains this intervention concerned with the psycho social functioning of the client system during the period of disequilibrium in order to address the immediate impact of an stressful event and to help mobilize the psychological capabilities and social resources of person directly.

The social worker needs to understand the fact that when a member of any family is disappeared there is such a great shift in the family that they cease to focus on anything other than the disappearance and investigation. With no certainties and absolutes the family loses its sense of control. The inability of the client system to cope with the issue of ambiguity and not knowing the fate of the disappeared person often land families in extreme conditions of stress. The unexpected event of disappearance is a situational crises for the family which unexpected and unanticipated. However the fact remains that individuals or families in the society are conditioned to expect a variety of traumas that may impact them in their life time such as illness, accident, poor mental health etc but they are not conditioned to expect that
a person will go missing and that for some are not able to find or know where they are. Such situation exposes the families to distress, shock, confusion, and considerable sense of being helpless.

The initial period immediately after the disappearance of the family member happens to be the most difficult one for the family. Any intervention at this time needs to be done with precision and great professional ability. The period asks for the intervention approach to be adopted which can be at least help families to cope the initial trauma. Therefore crisis intervention approach has been suggested by the researcher for the families of disappeared persons. The following skills as part of the crisis intervention can be taken by the social worker within the first four to six weeks of the disappearance of a family member:

(i) The present study shows that most families of the disappeared persons have been and are conducting their own investigation along side police and non police agencies. It can be an overwhelming task as the families have to take care of their lives at two fronts one at the personal ability to cope with the situation and going on with the process of finding the disappeared person. In such situations the social worker can suggest the families to maintain a record of their investigations, this way of doing the initial crisis intervention will be very different from journaling as at this point of time journaling may not be useful due to the fluctuation of moods from time to time.

(ii) The social worker keeping in view the professional value that every individual has an ability and resources to cope with his personal or interpersonal problems. The social worker should focus on these coping capacities of the families by making them understand the fact that it is a thing of pride for them that they are surviving each day and have an ability to draw strength on what they need for the next day.

(iii) In the present study it is found that most of the persons who have disappeared were the earning members of the family, in such a situation it should be
ensured that families have access to financial resources, have appropriate legal aid and have access to support network in protecting family’s mental health.

(iv) The families should be supported while they meet the agencies working to locate their disappeared member. Cataloguing of questions with them prior to the meeting and taking notes on their behalf allows families to concentrate on the information being presented to them.

(v) The social workers may take a more simplistic approach to counselling concentrating on the prior events and what may happen tomorrow.

(vi) Rather than entering into discussions about the whereabouts or fate of their loved one, social worker should concentrate on naming the fact that the person is disappeared as the trauma – not what may or may not have happened to the person.

The following crisis intervention strategies can be applied by the social worker while working with the families of disappeared persons.

(i) It is very important to acknowledge that the state of disorganization will subside over time; with or without a professional help, the crisis will be typically over with a more focus on the resolving the crisis in a positive way and prevent the development of more serious and longstanding problem which often result in social, economical and health issues within the families.

(ii) The social worker should make use of active listing skill and offer emotional support to the client system. The families are in a heightened state of either anxiety or depression and also feel a sense of helplessness because of inability to change the situation and cope. The client is probably preoccupied with the event and will be finding it very difficult to focuses the attention on anything else. Before the client can consider alternatives, make decisions, or plan ways for resolving his problems, he or she will be in need of a strong emotional support from the social worker and other. The support can be provided
through simply acknowledging the existence of problem to offering strong verbal reassurance.

(iii) The social worker should involve others in the helping process during this intervention. The families who are in crisis can be very receptive to assistance provided by those whom they know and trust, it can include friends, relatives and colleagues. Encourage the client to reach out to others and with the permission of client contact the others to ensure that they are able to extend their help to the families.

(iv) Giving went to emotions allows one to feel light and distressed. The social worker should allow the clients to express their emotions and at the same time they should be aware about their intense anxiety especially during the first stage of crisis. If trying to cry allow the client to cry or express feeling for fear or anger while continuing with the process of emotional support. The clients strong feelings will lessen with time.

(v) Communicating hope is very essential. The hopeful attitude is an important element in responding to the clients issues. The social worker should communicate the belief in the clients ability to cope, he or she will be less fearful and gain confidence with the time.

(vi) The social worker should be actively involved with the client as they are not able to analyse situation correctly. The social worker should ask questions and actively examine the details of their situations.

(vii) The crisis situation makes the client feel that he or she is encountering a problem which is of great magnitude and is unmanageable. The social worker can break the problem into several small fragments to be addressed one at a time, this will make client feel more hopeful and in control of his situations.

(viii) Provide factual information to the client as mostly the client has misconceptions about his or her situation or because intense feelings have
distorted his or her perception of reality. By providing the factual information about the client concern will help his or her misunderstandings. When appropriate give honest feedback.

(ix) Decision making of client is among the early impairments that occur in the client system. Inability among the clients to make decision is among the very first outcomes of the crisis situation for the client. The social worker needs to provide directions as to what the client needs to do or what will probably happen if he or she takes a certain course of action. It is also very important to make client realise the possible outcomes of destructive behaviours.

(x) Encourage and reinforce the adaptive behaviour in the clients. Help the client to identify what kind of coping behaviours worked in the past; encourage the client to take the similar actions to address the present problem. It is very important to encourage them to take cautions so they begin to regain a faith and trust in their own potential.

(xi) The social worker can make use of behavioural contract as a means of providing the client with structure and direction. The behaviour contract is a technique used to structure behavioural counselling by making each of the necessary elements of the process clear and explicit that they may be written into an agreement for behaviour change that is understandable and acceptable to both client and social worker (DeRisi and Butz, 1975, pp.1-12. This will help the client to mobilize inner resources, and will also send the message that the social worker has confidence in his or her clients ability to take the steps needed to get through the crisis.

5.6 Counselling

The basic approach of counselling the families of disappeared persons who are experiencing the unresolved loss has a clear series of events. This is in the form of a cyclic pattern for the families experience long-term disappearance. The series of responding: to a crisis, to tolerance of the ambiguity of having someone missing, to a
trigger about the missing person, and then leading back to crisis, appears to happen over and over when a person’s location remains unknown social workers need to focus on the fact that sessions should focus on the same issues week after week. With this the social worker is able to drill down the details and uncovers the richness of issues that are very essential to be addressed in order to make families move forward.

The idea is to take time and step back and assess the families ability to build resilience, when circumstances remain stagnant, is the most successful tool in gauging a family’s ability to create this movement. Witnessing the breakdown of these barriers, that may have prevented families from building resilience and tolerating ambiguity, allows the health practitioner or professional to witness some opportunities for growth. Focussing sessions on the needs of the family members, and away from the missing person’s investigation, places the focus back on the client. Health practitioners and professionals who have contact with families of missing persons may also need to explore their own degrees of tolerance for ambiguity prior to engaging in therapeutic relationships with families (Boss,2006).

To work with families of missing persons, we must first understand our own fear of that phenomenon and of having no answers (Boss, Beaulieu, Weiling, Turner W & Lacruz, 2003).

When a person is disappeared it is not only him/her who is affected, a people close to him are effected emotionally, social financially, socially and physically. thereby leaving a large number of people to fight the trauma associated with the unresolved loss of a loved one. The present study shows that the families of the disappeared persons are experiencing differing degrees of trauma and ambiguity as a result of a loved one’s disappearance. In the initial stage of loss of a loved one, families are overwhelmed by feelings of anxiety and ambivalence about the ways in which they approach the disappearance. It is very important to understand that when someone first disappears and is reported missing, the police and non-police search agencies are the primary support mechanisms for families, but not always in case of those who are disappeared by the police or state forces. However, the initial focus is
on the physical location and return of the disappeared person and the emotional needs of the family are often set aside for these practical issues to be dealt with. With the constant uncertainty about the fate of their family member, it is very difficult for families to adequately express their needs. They don’t know why, where or how a loved one has disappeared and, perhaps more importantly, they don’t know how they will cope with being left behind.

The real challenge for the social worker while engaging in any emotional intervention is that they often find themselves helpless and frustrated in terms of finding ways to help families with emotional problems as they try not to add anything in their ambiguity and uncertainty they experience. The counselling framework which has been proposed by the researcher aims to assist social workers and other health practitioners in understanding the trauma and impact on families of missing persons and how they can best support those who are left behind. The intervention revolves around the five key themes proposed by Sarah Wayland (2007) which include: **Reanimation, A celebration so far, The trauma timeline, A protected place, and Opportunities for growth.** The themes counselling framework proposed will address the multi dimensional needs of the families and it also suggests techniques, tools and strategies that may be of use in addressing the complex responses demonstrated when someone disappears, regardless of the circumstance.

The present counselling approach suggested in the present study is appropriate for the families for whom the initial crisis response has been subsided and the family is living long-term impacts of having someone missing. But nevertheless family may be encountering the same situation while revisiting the events or the occasions which drag them back into the times of crisis, the events could be anniversaries, birthdays or the location of disappearance of the person and etc.

The five key themes around which the counselling as an intervention is suggested shall start with:
5.6.1 Reanimation

Initially while dealing with the families of disappeared the social worker may ask the family to talk about their family life and its members but, not the disappeared loved one. This exercise of asking families to tell their story helps them to revisit their lives include before, during and after the event of disappearance of the family member. When the session goes on families have a tendency to recount intricate details of the events like dates, times and people present. However, there emotional responses have often been overshadowed by a continuous struggle for locating the disappeared as it is obvious that the prime concern is the physical return of the disappeared persons.

The social worker has to explore and analyse the traumatic experience by assisting the families to narrate their stories or make them reveal their experiences after their family member got disappeared. This will help families to externalize the situation. According to Epston and White (1990) by making families to reveal their experiences the person becomes separated from their stories. They are able to experience the break from their performance of their stories they experience the capacity to intervene in their own life and relationships. The concept of disappearance is very complex and the families are very desperate to know the fate of their loving member whether he is alive or dead: disappeared is a space between. The social workers role in such a situation is to help families be able to decide whether to grieve the loss or wait for the persons return. As the situation which is inbetween the absence or presence of the persons is very hard to compromise with. Therefore the disappearance of a family member is an unresolved loss.

The social worker needs to make families experiencing the unresolved loss to accept the present situation and whatever in happening can be rectified in their lives by helping them to move forward, rather than moving on. It has been found that without clear and substantiate evidence, the families are rarely willing to accept that a disappeared person is not going to return. Therefore assisting families by using the phrase moving forward allows them to explore the unresolved nature of the loss and
the impact of ongoing hope. Furthermore, it will be helpful for families to feel that in moving forward they can retain the memories and the hope that the disappeared person will return. Boss (2006) suggested the following therapeutic ways to help families:

(i) Sharing what has been helpful with other families, this can be done in the form of communicating to the families about what has been witnessed from sitting with others who are experiencing similar losses or different families having the same experience can be allowed to share with each other. The process involves the focus on conversational style of sharing rather than a physical introduction of families to each other. The social worker can assist by providing the evidence based practice, normalising the experience of unresolved loss by sharing what others have done so before. One has to acknowledge the fact that at times it is very difficult for some families to share the impact of disappearance as they fear the disappeared will be judged on his return. This leads to the sense of isolation in the families, furthering the issue of ambiguity within the families. The social worker should try to explore the impact of a person being disappeared with one member of the family as it will perpetuate the sense of secrecy or aloneness for that person. Judith Herman (1992) in Trauma and Recovery speaks about the need for families to tell their own stories to allow them to ‘unpack’ their own individual experiences. In cataloguing some of these individual experiences families can feel a sense of shared experience.

(ii) The social worker should acknowledge that the sense of being stuck or frozen in the families is due to the external factor (incident of disappearance) rather than an internal weakness. Acknowledging this is a powerful medium to externalise the issue of disappearance from the family unit. This will lead to uncover the stories of families which will help the social worker to remove some of the hurdles that is experience by the family when they try to understand why they have been left behind. The social worker should give
family’s time and space to explore these concepts can assist in acknowledging how they are coping with the disappearance of a loved one.

(iii) Another very important strategy is to make use of family gatherings to generate discussions in sharing the loss has meant for them. The goal is to create a community from which the families of the disappeared could draw strength to regain resilience, as different people have different ways to address their problems. This also creates a sense of commonality among the families. When a Social worker talk of family gatherings one of the primary aims in working with families of disappeared persons is to assist in exploring the different perspectives and ideas of each family member. Allowing families an opportunity to talk about how they are responding to an unresolved loss and exploring ways that this can assist in the family coping both as a unit and individually, can be one of the methods of support offered.

(iv) The counsellor needs to explore the idea of hope in the families about the return of their family member as a way to assess change. The social worker needs to acknowledge that the more the time that passes after the person has vanished, the more the family’s priorities change, particularly so for many families of disappeared. The families can be helped to explore the optimal outcomes as well as the dark possibilities of what may have happened to a disappeared person as it may create a sense of openness about the progression they are experiencing. Families are free to change their ideas about hope. Changes can occur within and between sessions. Hope is also dependant on the status of the investigation and the impact of time on the concept of hope.

5.6.2 A Celebration so far

The issue of ritual is very central to the families of disappeared persons whether living in any past of the world and holds a very special position when it comes to the religious or traditional requirement, apart from self satisfaction. The families of disappeared person who experience the ambiguous loss, the importance of
remembering or mourning the disappeared is very much there. Identifying the loss does not force families to accept that the persons may not return: their hope is not dead. However, they have a tendency to make it a point within the family that the disappeared is remembered or given a special position through various acts. The social worker need to engage families in ways that help them find ways to celebrate their loved ones in a sense not of remembering the loss, but acknowledging that, for now, they are not with them. It is very important to understand that when a person disappears family at times can feel alienated or totally detached from the external world as there is no mechanism through which to acknowledge their loss. In death there are the rituals of funeral, cremation or burial as well as the embracing of the emotions triggered by the loss.

For the families their experience is the mirror image of grief however grief is associated with death, while disappearance is associated with trauma, which are two different experiences. The families of disappeared are reluctant to hold remembrance services for fear that this may suggest that they have given up hope. The families often seek support from their spiritual leaders or visiting the shrines this helps them with some stability in the chaos they are experiencing. The focus can be on the spirituality which in turn offer an opportunity to reflect on the missing person and to take control of the impact of not knowing of a loved one’s whereabouts. Counsellor needs to support the families to take control of the ways in which they acknowledge the loss of a loved one may create some structure in the midst of the ambiguity they are experiencing.

5.6.3 The Trauma Timeline

The families of the disappeared person often present a very clear timeline of events that provide a very precise details of when the person went missing and often an intimate account of how they tried to search the disappeared family member. The significance of trauma time line is very significant to the intervention of social worker as it will help the social worker to interweave the experiences of the families with the details of the disappeared persons case. This will also help the social worker to better
understand what has happened and the impact of the trauma by plotting a timeline with the family. In addition to this, the social worker develops in the families a depth and perspective to their experience without it being just an external recount of events. The trauma timeline also works in addressing other stressors families may have experienced both separately from, or leading up to, the experience of having someone missing. Health practitioners and professionals like clinical psychologists can be roped in to assist families to visually map the effects of their unresolved loss by looking to the past, focusing on the present and pondering the impact of the loss on their future. Looking to the future helps families deal with ambiguity, as they may be able to predict ways in which they may cope if the loss remains unresolved. The timeline helps to plot the relationship of the family with the disappeared person and some ideas for moving forward.

The timeline as a tool can also help social worker to develop an therapeutic model during the counselling relationship. While encouraging the families to tell their stories which has the “Disappearance” as an additional chapter. The trauma timeline catalogues the experiences leading up to having someone missing. In unpacking these prior events, the timeline may also assist in uncovering some of the emotion. In providing a space to reveal these issues the story can be told in a way that does not re-traumatize the family, as may happen in the constant retelling of events that occurs for many families. In exploring past traumas, social workers and professionals are able to help co-construct ways that families can continue to survive their ambiguous loss through their previous coping capacities. For some families of missing persons it is necessary to take a multi-disciplinary approach to their needs as well as their responses to trauma. To develop the capacity of families to cope with the present trauma, social worker is required to explore the impact of trauma on their lives can create opportunities to better understand the ways in which trauma is approached. The mapping of the timeline creates a mechanism for families to explore previous traumas they have experienced, which may impact on their ability to cope with their current loss. Helping families to co-construct a new reality, by exploring the impact of their
past trauma, the present and into the future can assist them in becoming ‘unstuck’. In this way social workers can support families in moving forward.

5.6.4 A Protected Place

Families of the disappeared persons often feel that community does not actually feel the impact on the families and fails to understand what may happen to people who are left to wait for the news of a loved one. Families may find it challenging to speak honestly about the ambiguity they face, for fear that they may be misunderstood or their concerns downplayed. The families are in need of a place where they can freely and without any fear discuss their emotions that having someone disappeared evokes and also where they can talk about the impact that disappearance of the member has on them. The idea is to built a psychological fence around the disappeared person, the trauma and the life challenges associated with disappearance of the family member. This can be a coping mechanism, which can give some respite to the families from awfulness of living with the unresolved loss. This approach allows the social worker to the families to fortify themselves, perhaps it’s like a special skill with the families, that they did not know they had or had not used for some time.

The approach primarily relies on the person’s ability and mastery to deal with their own challenges, the counselling room can be a person’s rehearsal space in which people can learn to use this new weapon. By giving due recognition to the psychological fences, the counsellor requires to help find the family, to find the exit to leave these protected places when they have to rejoin the community and move forward in their lives, one very important factor which needs to be taken care of is the dependency of the families on the environment provided to develop this skill, therefore exit from this environment has to be very well planned. It gives back a sense of control over the ways in which they live with an unresolved loss. The analogy of finding an exit through which the families rejoin the community can present in differing forms. Deveson (2003) in her book Resilience are useful in exploring the ways in which families can survive an ambiguous loss. Deveson refers to resilience as
‘an ability to confront adversity and still find hope and meaning in life’ (p.3). In exploring this idea with families, it suggests that they can live with the unresolved loss of a loved one whilst living the rest of their life. This as an example of the ‘both/and’ approach to coping. In leaving the protected place, families also need to acknowledge that they can choose to re-enter these places when needed. Due to the random nature of unresolved loss, families are often forced to re-enter when a thought or a reminder about the missing person triggers their emotions. Some families of long-term missing persons speak about visiting the ‘awfulness’ of ambiguity when they are within these protected places. Counselling can act as an invitation for people to move out of these places as well as an opportunity to re-enter when they want to reflect upon the missing person.

It is to be understood that relationship of families with other can have an impact on a family’s capacity to find a protected place. For some families of disappeared persons the response from the communities like close friends, and extended families can have an adverse impact on their coping ability.

Giving a family permission to move in and out of their anguish gives some power back to families disempowered by the ambiguity of an unresolved loss.

5.6.5 Opportunities for Growth

As discussed earlier, the experience of unresolved loss and the ways support can be provided is often hampered by keeping the notion that families of the disappeared need to move on and accept what has happened to them. The Social worker needs to understand that, there is no special way that families of disappeared persons will accept that the disappeared person will or will not return. The families are constantly forced to acknowledge the state of ambiguity. From the counselling point of view the ability of the family to live with unresolved loss does not entirely rest upon the status of the disappeared person’s investigation. The opportunities for growth, reflects that in living with ambiguous loss there is a scope for change and movement. The social worker should also understand that it is impossible to know
exactly how long there would be the ambiguity about the fate of disappeared person. Therefore, there is a need of showing to the families a commitment on part of the counsellor or agency that they will be available long-term. The provision of continuous support impacts upon the families ability to grow and learn through their journey inspite of being feeling vulnerable. Therefore there is a need in a form of distinct shift in the level of interaction and intervention required by the people that attend counselling. For some families there is no contact with the counselling or support services particularly during the first six months as families are busy in assisting police or non police agencies to search their family member. Therefore, after six months, if the person has not yet been located and his whereabout are not known, families are placed in a position where they have to begin to contemplate the idea that they may never find out what happened to their missing loved one. Thus the very important period for counselling intervention is lapsed and lost. This often happens at a time when the community’s interest in the case has diminished or people have stopped enquiring about the status of the case because of their discomfort with the lack of new information.

From this point onwards there are a number of strategies that can be used to assist families to grow. Making families accept that there is always a possibility to grow within the loss is a very difficult task and families often reject this concept. Social workers need to make them understand that growth’ does not have to be the result of a positive incident. It can be triggered by a negative situation akin to having someone missing. Exploring the impact of unresolved loss is a long-term process; linking change and loss is a powerful method of intervention for families of missing persons. Helping families to explore the movement they have experienced since the disappearance may help to predict ways in which they can survive unresolved loss. The interaction of families with each other and making families share the ways they have grown to live with their unresolved losses and how they coped to other families helps a lot. The families can be asked and encouraged to be proactive and make use of media, community awareness campaigns and so that their needs are made known to
the agencies and government. Similarly making documented account of their practical and emotional journey and making themselves available to talk and meet others in similar circumstances. Also Lobbying government agencies to change policies in accordance with the needs of the families and assistance is provided so as to strengthen the link between the disappearance of a loved one and the reasons. It is very important to understand that Seeking a sense of respite, often years after the disappearance, provides a mechanism to help some families move forward. For some families there is also a sense that, even if they cannot change their situation, they may have the capacity to change the experience for someone else. This can create a sense of purpose and meaning. From an interpersonal level families have also found ways to cope by noting their emotional growth during their experience. As they choose to think of the disappeared person in a different way for example, a brother of a disappeared persons can be encouraged to while in seeing clothes, books, movies etc preferred by his brother, he will be able to reflect on how grateful he is that he knows his brother’s likes and dislikes rather than feeling the pain of his absence. The sign of growth can be seen from the point that families giving themselves permission to have some respite from the investigation: not feeling a sense that every hour of every day has to be completely focused on the missing person. In focusing on opportunities for growth and incorporating the four other themes in this framework, the health practitioner or professional’s role is to analyse ways in which families can develop a tolerance for ambiguity. This is the goal of intervention.

5.7 Disappearance: An Unresolved loss

The only respite from the continuous ambiguity and pain associated with disappearance can be over only families know whether the disappeared person is located either dead or alive. However, there are often psychological and physical impact associated with the disappearance of the person and may continue to affect the persons left behind for several years. The present study reveals that the families primarily ask and want to know the fate of their family member and if they find their loved one dead or alive will be the primary resolution of their loss. Counselling for
the families does not end when the disappeared person is located, although some families feel that they no longer need the counselling services, but there can still be a significant benefit from ongoing counselling for them. It is known that families of the disappeared want resolution, there is not a single family that would wish of a person to be located deceased. Families of missing persons want resolution; they do not want to be told that the missing person is deceased. These are two different issues that need to be explored and supported in a safe and accepting environment.