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Contents

Page 1 Introduction

Reviewed articles

Page 3 The Community Participatory Evaluation Tool for psychosocial programs: a guide to implementation

Martha Bragin

Page 25 The impact of the Eritrean-Ethiopian border conflict on the children in Eritrea: the role of protective factors

Lineke Westerveld-Sassen

Page 33 Psychological impact of war and sexual abuse on adolescent girls in Northern Uganda

Kennedy Amone-P'Olak

Page 46 PTSD, depression and acculturation

Derrick Silove, Vijaya Manicavasagar, Mariano Coello & Jorge Aroche

Field reports

Page 51 Trauma awareness, healing and group counselling in secondary schools

Judith Olij

Page 57 Structure in word and image. Combining narrative therapy and art therapy in groups of survivors of war

Ivo van der Velden & Mirjam Koops

Page 65 Psychosocial work in the aftermath of the Tsunami

Ananda Galappatti

Page 70 Book/article reviews

Page 74 Summaries in Arabic

Page 76 Summaries in French

Page 78 Summaries in Sinhalese

Page 80 Summaries in Spanish

Page 82 Summaries in Tamil

Introduction

Finding donors for a psychosocial project is usually a difficult, and time consuming, process. However, suddenly after the Tsunami, things are very different. Staff members of aid organisations reported receiving calls from representatives of donor-organizations, inquiring; 'Are you starting a project in the countries affected by the Tsunami? If so, may we sponsor you?' As a staff member of the War Trauma Foundation I was personally approached by an organization that insisted on donating a considerable sum of money, on the proviso it was used to implement a project for children traumatised by the Tsunami. I showed one of the decision makers in this organization a proposal for a psychosocial project that was aimed at the general population of a conflict area in the region affected by the Tsunami. Nevertheless, he was not at all enthusiastic. He observed that the proposal contained only a few activities aimed specifically at children. Moreover, these activities were meant for all children in the community, not just the children that had lost family members because of the Tsunami. It took quite a while to explain that traumatised children should not be isolated from their non-traumatised peers in any attempt to provide help. In addition, most of the adults involved in the program were parents and teachers who could play an important role in the reconstruction of the community after multiple disasters, of which the Tsunami was only the most recent. Donors still think often in terms of helping groups of individual children through trauma therapy and teddy bears; fieldworkers these days believe more often in restoring, and sometimes adding to, the coping mechanisms of the communities where these children live.

This issue of *Intervention* opens with an article by Martha Bragin, who has experience with psychosocial programs aimed at restoring community coping mechanisms. Such programs need to be evaluated, and Bragin describes a set of tools that can help, both in assessing the needs of children affected by armed conflict or other life-threatening occurrences, and the effect of psychosocial programs. In order to illustrate the use of these tools, she describes a program carried out in Eritrea, aimed at restoring community life as much as possible by organizing emergency schools, activities for children and adolescents, support for mothers, orphans, widows, ill and disabled people. All members of the community were involved in these activities. The effect of this project on the children in the community is indeed impressive.

Eritrea also is the location of the project in the article by Lineke Westerveld-Sassen. She used a different approach for assessing the needs of the children, and concludes that few children showed symptoms related to traumatisation. She explains that this was possible due to the presence of four protective factors. These factors can be summarised by saying that the community as a whole was kept together.

The next article, written by Kennedy Amone P'Olak describes the consequences of war and sexual abuse on adolescent girls in Uganda. Readers that might be intimidated by the description of the research methods used by the author, should at least look at box 2, which contains excerpts from the stories of the girls in question.

The article includes interesting suggestions for psychosocial interventions aimed at adolescent girls in conflict areas. One of the interventions mentioned by the author is psycho education around the consequences of traumatic experiences, and education

aimed at giving these girls means of a livelihood.

Education as an approach for helping traumatised people is also discussed in the next article, written by Silove et al. They describe a study of the effects of an educational program for traumatised refugees from the former Yugoslavia, currently living in Sidney, Australia. This group may differ in many ways from the Ugandan girls in the previous article. Here, the education was aimed at informing the refugees about life in the country of exile. The authors conclude that this educational program did not work for people suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or major depression.

The field report by Judith Olij takes us back to Africa. She describes a project in secondary schools in Rwanda, where huge crises occur almost daily. An educational program aimed at trauma awareness, combined with training in helpful active listening for both staff members and students, was proven highly effective.

In previous issues of *Intervention*, articles on narrative therapy with individual clients have been published. The article by Van der Velden & Koops is on narrative group therapy, in combination with art therapy. This approach was developed for war victims in Western countries; but some elements of it might be inspiring for professional aid workers in other parts of the world.

The last contribution to this issue was written by Ananda Galappatti, editor of *Intervention* and presently working in the east coast area of Sri Lanka. He describes the numerous challenges brought to the local psychosocial fieldworkers arising from the aftermath of the Tsunami.

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