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From the editors . . . a widening diversity and dynamism

A new look and (sub)title, a new Editor in chief and a new diversity of voices

This new year of Intervention brings with it many exciting changes and a diversity of new voices and expertise, write Marian Tankink and Peter Ventevogel, announcing a change in Editor in chief. After six years of successful leadership, hard work and dedication at the helm, Peter Ventevogel has taken on a more hands-on position with UNHCR, while remaining at the heart of the journal as a member of the Editorial Board. At the same time, Intervention is equally proud to welcome our new Editor in chief, Marian Tankink, who brings a new vision to the journal as a medical anthropologist, specialising in interpersonal violence in post conflict areas and with refugees. This is, however, far from the only changes to be seen and read in this new, double thick, issue of Intervention.

A new look, a new cover

In this, our 12th year of publication, we can look back and see how the field of mental health and psychosocial support has changed and grown into an evermore exciting and dynamic field, responding to the mental health needs of communities most affected by armed conflict and natural disaster. We are proud that *Intervention* has remained at the forefront of this field and believe our new cover reflects our aim to continue to grow, staying open to new voices and areas of inquiry and cooperation, while also respecting the traditional voices that have contributed to making *Intervention* such a success. We believe our new cover more accurately reflects this dynamic growth in the field, and within the journal. Additionally, we have also changed the (sub)title of

the journal, to more accurately reflect our work.

A new (sub)title: Intervention, Journal for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Conflict Affected Areas

The new cover and (sub)title are not simply cosmetic changes, they are the result of long discussions with the Editorial Board, Editors and Editorial staff. The original name of the journal: *Intervention, the International Journal of Mental Health, Psychosocial Work and Counselling in Areas of Armed Conflict*, accurately reflected the beginnings of both the field, and the first journal to document it. When the journal was established in 2003, the field was fiercely divided between proponents of community based interventions and those who advocated for clinical interventions, derived from psychiatry and psychotherapy. The phrase *'mental health, psychosocial work and counselling'* expressed the wish of the editors for an open and inclusive journal for *'all schools'*. In the intervening years, both the journal and the field have shifted and grown, and the title no longer accurately reflected this, as was shown in the review of the first decade of *Intervention* by Van den Berg, Akello & Sonpar (2013).

In the discussions of how to better reflect where we are now, it was noted that over the years the acronym MHPSS (mental health and psychosocial support) has become a household term in the field, and

within our journal. As a result, we felt it important to include this term in our title. Another change concerned the use of the phrase '*in areas of armed conflict*', as it seemed to cause confusion because many, if not most, articles in the journal describe the situation after direct violence has ended. In choosing to use the phrase: '*conflict affected areas*', we felt that it better reflected situations of actual armed conflict, as well as those of recovery after conflict. Moreover, it was important to note that '*conflict*' may also be expressed without arms. Situations of structural adversity are often strongly linked with political conflict, oppression and structural injustices (Farmer, 2005). Also, given the increasing threat to livelihoods due to population pressure and climate change, many violent conflicts are related to global socio political inequities. The main title, however, remains '*Intervention*'; a reflection of all contributions in the journal, and an acknowledgement of their direct or indirect relation to the work and interventions in the field.

New voices and expertise

As well as the more visible changes, there are those behind the scenes, as we welcome new members to the Editorial Board: *Janice Cooper, Rebecca Horn, Mark Jordans* and *Peter Ventevogel*. With their expertise and networks we believe the journal will continue to grow and strengthen. Just as the field has grown beyond those early, divisive positions, we believe that to continue to broaden the diversity of voices at the centre of our Editorial Board will enable us to successfully navigate whatever this new period will bring.

Cross fertilisation

As we are seeing more and more cross fertilisation within the field, we believe that *Intervention* can serve the field best by providing a platform for this broadening of diversity. While the journal's main aim will continue to be to publish papers from contexts affected by conflict, we will also continue

to welcome papers on complex emergencies following '*natural*' disasters in low income settings. The Editorial Board believes that the issues at stake in disaster contexts share many similarities with typical conflict settings. These sorts of similarities are well illustrated in the current issue of the journal. For example, in the article by *Babak Moayedoddin, Christelle Nangho Makaya & Alessandra Canuto*. These authors analyse the mental health response after a major accident, an explosion at an ammunition store, in the Republic of the Congo. They show that despite the scale of the destruction and the depth of the suffering, the crisis also created a new perspective. Often a major crisis provides the impetus for change, as well as the ingredients to realise it. As such, this short paper from the Republic of the Congo fits with recent attention given to (re)construction of mental health care systems after disasters (Pérez-Sales et al., 2011; WHO, 2013).

Or, through the work of *Megan McGrath & Alison Schafer*, who describe an attempt to integrate psychosocial support into nutrition programmes in the drought affected Sahel region in West Africa. The authors make it very clear that to prevent (further) mental deprivation of children as a result of the food crisis, psychosocial support needs to be combined with nutrition activities.

Both papers clearly demonstrate that programming for mental health and psychosocial support in resource poor countries, characterised by malfunctioning public services, weak governmental policies and high levels of poverty and other adversity, can run largely along the same lines as in areas affected by war.

A Special Section on peacebuilding and psychosocial work

At the heart of this issue is a special section on the relation between psychosocial work

and peacebuilding, another area rich in cross fertilisation. The Editorial Board cooperated with two guest editors: *Brandon Hamber* and *Elizabeth Gallagher*, both affiliated with INCORE (the International Conflict Research Institute) at the University of Ulster, Northern Ireland. Some of the papers for this special section were written by authors who collaborated with INCORE, while others were submitted directly to the journal after a call for papers in an earlier issue. This led to a wonderful collection of papers that are diverse in scope, voice and geographical background (Bosnia & Herzegovina, Guatemala, Burma (Myanmar), Northern Ireland, occupied East Jerusalem, Rwanda and South Sudan) that is also a valuable addition to the papers published in a 2005 issue of *Intervention* dedicated to *reconciliation*, another facet of peacebuilding,¹ edited by Guus van der Veer, our first Editor in chief.

In the introduction to the *Special Section*, *Hamber, Gallagher & Ventevogel* characterise the various papers and make a plea for more attention to be given to the relationship between MHPSS interventions and collective social transformation. They argue that, all too often, MHPSS practitioners focus on improvements in well-being of individuals and families, while not sufficiently taking into account that these should also take place within larger processes of societal change. Practitioners should, therefore, be more cognisant that MHPSS interventions could contribute to (or hinder) *'building a wider peace or creating a social context that could impact more positively on overall psychological wellbeing'*. The question remains: how to reach that goal if people remain extremely hurt and traumatised by fellow citizens, and have learned to never express their real feelings or opinions in public, not even within small groups. They may keep silent, or reserve their deeper opinions about the *other* and former enemies for within the closeness of their families. Clearly, these are issues that need

to be explored further, and we would welcome contributions on this topic for future issues of the journal.

As well as the whole section, we would also like to highlight another paper that brings yet another new voice to *Intervention*, by *Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian*, who wrote a thought provoking paper on how Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem cope with death and grief within the context of ongoing oppression. This article is, in many ways, an *'outlier'* for *Intervention*; it has not been written by a psychosocial specialist, but by a human rights lawyer. It does not have a direct focus on *'practical interventions'*, as many of the studies in our journal have, but does provide much food for thought that can be used to critically review practical interventions. Also new to many *Intervention* readers is the author's use of a particular research approach, known in the social sciences as *'interpretive anthropology'*, in which the researcher does not take a stance of establishing an *'objective'* or *'neutral picture'*, but writes *'from within'* the group that she studies. The author uses the first person *'I'* form in this paper and provides lengthy quotes from the people she interviewed. In doing so, the author is able to make the anger and despair of Palestinians in their occupied city almost palpable. The paper also makes clear that the Palestinians, even in the complex interactions around their dead loved ones, find ways to resist mere victimhood and show resilience.

Fiety Meijer-Degen, reports on the insights she has developed as an art therapist, working worldwide with survivors of violence and torture. She shares the practical experiences that she has accumulated over the course of many years. Along with the paper by *Lykes & Crosby* elsewhere in this issue (on creative methodologies with Mayan women), and the paper by Cohen (2013) in a previous issue of the journal, these papers show the power of creative techniques and strongly demonstrate that dialogue does not always need words.

And last, but not least

The personal reflection of *Ali Dokmak* deserves special attention as another new voice to *Intervention*. As a student, the author became involved in War Child Holland's methodology *'Performing Peace'* through theatre in Lebanon, with the intention of better understanding the past and *'the other'* as a path to create dialogue. At 19 years of age, he is the youngest author ever published in *Intervention*, and a youthful voice we hope to hear more often within its pages.

Marian Tankink, Editor in chief
Peter Ventevogel, former Editor in chief

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¹ See: Bar-On, 2005; Becker, 2005; Galtung, 2005; Le Touze, Silove, & Zwi, 2005; Richters, Dekker, & Jonge, 2005.

Acknowledgements

Welcome to the new Editor in chief

Marian Tankink, PhD, is a medical anthropologist, former community psychiatric nurse and specialised in interpersonal violence in post conflict areas, and with refugees. Her doctoral thesis is a medical anthropological study on how refugee women in the Netherlands, from Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina and South Sudan, are coping with experiences of war related sexual violence and why they remain silent. She has done qualitative research in Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania and Afghanistan, as well as in refugee centres in The Netherlands on several topics related to the question of how people cope with war experiences, as individuals, within the family and in the community, as well as what they do to remain psychologically healthy, or become healthy again. She has also worked with an NGO

for improving Community Strengthening and Mental Health in Sudan and Burundi.
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Thanks to the former Editor in chief

With this issue, Peter Ventevogel MD, ends his term as Editor in chief. The editorial staff thanks Peter for an intensive and pleasant time and for all the excellent work he has done for the journal. We wish him all the best in his new position as Senior Mental Health Expert at the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) in Geneva. He will remain a member of the Editorial Board of the journal.

Welcome to the new members of the Editorial Board

As per January 2014, the Editorial Board of *Intervention* welcomes other new members:

- Janice Cooper, PhD, MPA, lives in Liberia where she works with Carter Center as the Mental Health Country Director. She has a PhD in Health Policy from Harvard University and a Masters in Public Administration from Columbia University in New York. Prior to joining the Carter Center in 2010, Janice Cooper was the Interim Director for the National Center for Children in Poverty at Columbia, where her focus was on children's mental health. In Liberia she has focused on training mid level clinicians to provide mental health service, integrate mental health into primary care, stigma reduction and support for policy to support good practice in Liberia.
- Rebecca Horn, PhD, is a psychologist, specialised in psychosocial wellbeing and domestic violence in populations affected by conflict, especially those who have been displaced. She works as an independent psychosocial consultant for various NGOs, and has done research on policy and practice of mental health and psychosocial support, publishing regularly in *Intervention*. She is affiliated with the Institute of International Health and Development, Queen Margaret University (UK) as a Research Fellow, and with the Columbia Group for Children in Adversity, as a Senior Research Associate.
- Mark Jordans, PhD, is a child psychologist. He is Head of Research with the NGO HealthNet TPO in Amsterdam, the Netherlands and a Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Global Mental Health at King's College London. His work focuses on the development, implementation and evaluation of psychosocial and mental health care systems in low and middle income countries, especially for children in adversity and in fragile states. He is co-founder of TPO Nepal, a leading mental health NGO in Nepal, where he has worked between 1999 and 2011.