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## From the editor

This issue opens with a paper by *Kerrie James* that is somewhat unusual. It is not the general subject that is so unusual, an approach to training lay counsellors, but the initiatives' target group, urban setting, and inclusion in a peer-reviewed journal. *Intervention* takes pride in the fact that we often present papers that stretch the boundaries, as this one does, in this case because of its highly descriptive and experiential character.

The author shares with us her own experiences while training refugee women from Myanmar (Burma) as lay counsellors in urban India, and in doing so, makes herself vulnerable. Undoubtedly other trainers, in other contexts, would have made other

choices. However, in doing so, they might ignore the valuable lessons we can learn from her experiences. This paper is also unusual as, until now, initiatives to work with refugees from Myanmar in India tend to be overlooked in the humanitarian world, as they are a relatively small target group. Additionally, the trainees are *urban* refugees, for whom conventional approaches that focus on rural communities or refugee camps cannot always be applied. Lastly, this paper describes the training of lay counselors who are themselves affected by similar problems as their clients, and are from the same group. Training 'peer helpers' deserves more attention in our field.

Another unusual article for *Intervention*, by *Charlotte Freeman*, uses a theory from social psychology, developed in the United States during the mid-20th century, to provide a framework for understanding ethnic prejudice. The so-called '*contact hypothesis*' also provides conceptual tools to combat such prejudice. Freeman shows how the principles of this theory can provide valuable insights when applied to present day Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a result of political agreements, to reduce the chance of ethnic based violence, different ethnic groups have retracted into segregated communities. The author links her theoretical framework with case descriptions to illustrate methods to improve contact between divided groups who have experienced conflict. One example that Freeman briefly mentions I found particularly compelling, a nongovernmental organisation working with families whose relatives had disappeared during the war. Coming from ethnic groups that were hostile to each other, the common goal of finding their loved ones and the severe grief suffered by these families, has become 'a *common shared identity*' and fostered relationships and cooperation across the ethnic divide.

*Lotte Claessens, Donatien de Graaff, Mark Jordans, Frits Boer & Tom van Yperen* report on the development and use of a participatory monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tool in northern Uganda. The aim of the study was to evaluate a psychosocial, life skills intervention for war affected children. Unusually, this was implemented by collecting the information with the children as key informants. This carefully written article shows that it is possible to involve children in the evaluation of intervention programmes, but also the difficulties it creates. *Bosede Awodola*, a Nigerian researcher, critically analyses the various methods of reintegrating former child soldiers in Liberia. Educational support, skills acquisition and family reunification were the main methods studied and used. According to the author's findings, these methods are accompanied by a number of challenges, such as: funding; inadequate infrastructure in the educational sector; weak economic capacity of families to support these children; and ineffective follow up mechanisms by implementing agencies. In the author's view, a viable reintegration programme should enhance community cohesion, and participation, through adequate funding of the educational sectors and economic provision for poor families in the reintegration programme. She also states that specific programmes should have been designed to reach out to children not returned to a family setting.

Striking out into definite new territories for the field, *Roos Korste* argues that we, in the field of mental health and psychosocial work, should use modern telecommunication techniques to transfer knowledge. If you do not know what e-learning and m-learning are, and how SMS text messages could be used as educational tools, read this fascinating paper.

In the field report by *Rebecca Syed Sheriff & Susannah Whitwell*, an approach to strengthen human resource capacity in mental health care in Somaliland, is presented. There are no qualified psychiatrists and therefore, through a long term partnership between health care institutions in the United Kingdom and Somaliland, junior doctors (interns) were motivated and supported to become mental health representatives. These representatives work to actively integrate mental health care into the existing health systems on a variety of levels. In this promising approach, the authors expressed their surprise at how these interns were able to improve conditions, and help to alleviate some of the stigma attached to mental health issues.

*Felician Francis, Ananda Galappatti & Guus van der Veer* emphasise, in another field report, that staff support programmes should go further than mere individual stress management. Sources of stress among staff are often related to the way the work is organised, and the way the management of an organis-

ation allows staff to participate in the shaping of their activities. The authors conclude that staff members are capable of making and carrying out their own action plans for improving staff care.

Another unusual aspect of this issue, but one that we hope to become a more regular feature, is that it has three book reviews. *Peter Ventevogel* reviews a book about how American styles of psychiatry are being globalised. Finally, this issue also contains two book reviews on the reintegration of former child soldiers in Uganda. *Grace Akello* critically examines an edited volume on female child soldiers in northern Uganda. The book draws from various perspectives, including ethnography and theology, and that is not always an easy combination. *Iris van der Mark* discusses the recent dissertation by Margaret Angucia on the social reintegration of Ugandan child soldiers.

Peter Ventevogel  
*Editor in chief*

#### **Announcement**

Marijke Tibosch, a Dutch psychologist, has been appointed *Intervention's* new Book review editor. She will use the data base in the *Editorial Manager* system ([www.editorialmanager.com/int](http://www.editorialmanager.com/int)) to identify potential reviewers for books, and will announce books for review in the discussion group on the *Mental Health and Psychosocial Network*: [www.mhpss.net](http://www.mhpss.net) If you would like to review a book, please check out the website, or write to: [editor@interventionjournal.com](mailto:editor@interventionjournal.com)