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Contents

Page 1 From the editor

Peer reviewed articles
Page 4 Training Burmese refugee counsellors in India
Kerrie James
Page 17 The psychosocial need for intergroup contact: practical suggestions for reconciliation initiatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina and beyond
Charlotte M. L. Freeman
Page 30 An examination of methods to reintegrate former child soldiers in Liberia
Busede Awoola
Page 43 Participatory evaluation of psychosocial interventions for children: a pilot study in Northern Uganda
Lotte F. Claessens, Donatien C. de Graaff, Mark J. D. Jordans, Frits Boer & Tom van Yperen

Field reports
Page 59 An innovative approach to integrating mental health into health systems: strengthening activities in Somaliland
Rebecca Syed Sheriff & Susannah Whitewell
Page 66 How to convey the new World Health Organization mental health Intervention Guide to workers in the field?
Roos Körste
Page 74 Developing a responsive model of staffcare beyond individual stress management: a case study
Felician Thayalaraj Francis, Ananda Galappatti & Guus van der Veer

Letter to the editor
Page 79 Josi Salem-Pickartz, Samir Samawi & Lidia Barakat

Book reviews
Page 81 Culture, religion, and the reintegration of female child soldiers in Northern Uganda, edited by Bard Maeland
Grace Akello
Page 83 Broken Citizenship: Formerly Abducted Children and Their Social Reintegration in Northern Uganda by Margaret Angucia
Iris van der Mark
Page 86 Crazy like Us. The globalization of the American psyche by Ethan Watters
Peter Ventevogel

Summaries
Page 89 Summaries in Arabic, French, Russian, Pashto, Sinhala, Spanish and Tamil

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 the 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.
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 organisation 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.editorial manager.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 If you would like to review a book, please check out the website, or write to: editor@interventionjournal.com