

Introduction

In this issue, a variety of matters is brought up for discussion. It opens with an article by Ananda Galapatti who describes the controversy around the question of what constitutes psychosocial work. Some people involved in this field are in favour of delineating a narrow group of activities that may be considered as psychosocial work. Others desire a broad definition of psychosocial interventions, so that all kinds of individual, institutional and community-based activities might be included. In his article, Galapatti describes the theoretical debate behind this controversy; he also discusses a conceptual model that can describe diverging psychosocial interventions. This model could become a good basis for exploring the relative merits of different psychosocial approaches.

Mark Jordans et al. present a detailed review of the content of a training programme for counsellors in Nepal. The article is meant to give the readers an understanding of the training of counsellors as it practised by the authors, and describes both training methods and subject matter. The contribution by Dickmann et al. is also relevant for readers involved with counselling and counselling training, but it has a much less broad subject: it describes the use of little plastic dolls during counselling, counselling training and supervision. This technique may help trainers and counsellors to overcome cultural differences; it also stimulates clients and counsellors to look at themselves and their problems from a certain distance.

Counsellors in areas of armed conflict may be traumatised themselves. Elisabeth Fries describes her meetings with a group of counsellors in the Democratic Republic of

Congo. During these meetings the traumatic experiences of these counsellors were discussed, and a ritual was performed. Most of all the meetings helped participants to start the process of overcoming the psychological consequences of their recent traumatic experiences. During the meetings a programme for psycho-education on stress and trauma was also developed, as a contribution to community healing.

The ongoing armed conflict in Kashmir has painful psychological consequences for local communities. Psycho-education is an obvious approach for helping the people involved in dealing with these consequences. Naheem Hamdani describes how psycho-education was done through a series of radio programmes. Many listeners indicated that the coping strategies discussed in the radio programmes were quite useful for them, stimulating them to talk about their problems.

Some controversy exists about the severity and duration of the adverse consequences of armed conflict for mental health. Even about the consequences of the Second World War there are differences in opinion. This issue contains an article on the important role volunteers can play in war-related distress. In this article, Anica Mikuš Kos et al. write that they never found data showing a higher number of disorders in Second World War generations. But Mooren et al., in their article on the evaluation of health services in war, express a different opinion. They state that 'even after almost half a century, the social and medical sciences evidently demonstrate the existence of long-term scars of this war'. Western clinicians working with victims of the Second World War or the

*Introduction**Intervention 2003, Volume 1, Number 2, Page 01 - 02*

children of these victims will agree with the opinion that in individual cases armed conflict may have long-lasting psychological consequences; aggravating consequences that may be even transferred to the next generation. On the other hand, there is evidence of non-clinical samples showing that victims of armed conflict may lead lives that are not less successful or less happy than people who were not victimised (Helmreich, 1992)¹. What factors in the community could explain the fact that many victims of armed conflict indeed seem to overcome their problems, while others don't? Maybe these matters can be discussed more extensively in future issues of this journal.

The article by Anica Mikuš Kos et al. is

important because she shows that even in traumatised communities, volunteers can make an important contribution to psychosocial projects and community healing. The article by Mooren et al. has a completely different but equally interesting focus: it offers a method which counsellors and programme managers can use to demonstrate the importance of their work in areas of armed conflict.

Guus van der Veer

¹ Helmreich, W.B. (1992) *Against all odds: holocaust survivors and the successful lives they made in America*. New York, Simon & Schuster.

Notice to readers

INTERVENTION, *The International Journal of Mental Health, Psychosocial Work and Counselling in Areas of Armed Conflict* is the continuation of *The International Journal of Mental Health, Psychosocial Work and Counselling in Areas of Armed Conflict* published in January 2003 (ISSN 1391-7994). INTERVENTION will be published three times per year.

The Editorial staff has the privilege to introduce a new member (Julio Arenas) and three new members of the International Board of Editors (Merle Friedman, Rachel Tribe and Loes van Willigen) .

Julio Arenas (Denmark, originally from Chile), psychologist, works as research coordinator at the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims in Copenhagen. He is senior researcher and Board member at the University of Copenhagen, Centre for Multi-Ethnic Traumatic Stress Research and Practice.

Merle Friedman is executive director of the South African Institute for Traumatic Stress, and member of the board of directors of the International Society of Traumatic Stress Studies, the African Society of Traumatic Stress Studies and Victim Support South Africa.

Dr Rachel Tribe (Britain), chartered psychologist, currently works at the School of Psychology and with the Refugee Studies Programme, University of East London. She has worked with refugees and internally displaced people in Britain and in other countries for a period of approximately 20 years.

Dr. Loes van Willigen (The Netherlands), medical doctor, is working as a Refugee Health Care Consultant. She is president of the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration, and Honorary President of the International Society for Health and Human Rights.