

Complexities in Addressing MHPSS Needs Among Children in Settings of Active Conflict

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War Child Holland

A Guatemalan Story

- Level 2 intervention for kids in rural villages, site of genocide and ongoing repression
- Centralized training (10 days) of lay facilitators in expressive arts and play-based intervention
- Aims were to create safe, supportive spaces for kids to recover capacity to play and be creative, to find support from adults and peers, and to express their worries and concerns

Results

After 2 years, no one had implemented the project in their community.

There was no impact to evaluate.

Numerous Barriers

- Too dangerous in some areas
- Lack of cultural fit of some activities
- But most consistent barrier was lack of adequate support in the field
 - Lack of awareness of support needs
 - Also, difficult and dangerous to get to many areas

Takeaway...

- *The most well designed intervention is only as effective as the quality of its implementation.*
- Good implementation requires adequate training and adequate support.
- I've seen a lot of organizations struggle with this.
 - Underestimating what's actually needed
 - Training and support are resource intensive

So What?

- War Child Holland developing PSS new tools/interventions
- Level 3 PSS intervention, roughly along the lines Richard so nicely described yesterday.
 - Just beginning to explore content and format
 - Pilot test and develop in setting a step removed from conflict
- Also developing “Coping with Conflict” modules for I Deal program.
 - A response to pressing demands from Syria team
 - CFS and Life skills program not adequately addressing needs of kids in setting of active, intense conflict

Key Challenges/Issues

- Realistic and safe content
 - Can we help kids manage their distress and strengthen their coping resources in ways that *do no harm*?
 - Manage fears and anxiety
 - Identify and use social support
 - Strategies for minimizing risk
 - Can we help parents and teachers be maximally supportive to kids?
 - What is the harm of *not* addressing these unmet needs?
- Training and Support for these modules in setting of intense conflict
 - Logistics, resources, and facilitators' own histories