DEVELOPING AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO
PEACEBUILDING AND MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHO SOCIAL SUPPORT

FRIEDERIKE BUBENZER

with Marian Tankink and Yvonne Sliep

Institute for Justice and Reconciliation

DECEMBER 2019
WHY INTEGRATE?

• Violent conflict has a significant but often under-acknowledged impact on human beings; it weakens the social fabric; people’s capacity for recovery and their willingness and ability to participate in social recovery processes.

• After conflict, the causes of conflict often remain and continue to foster mistrust and fear.

• Both MHPSS professionals as well as peacebuilders aim, ultimately, to restore relationships and the social fabric that binds and supports people within their communities as a way of disrupting cycles of violence and building sustainable peace.

• Each field has different ways of achieving its goals; but there are significant overlaps.

• However, the two fields work mostly in isolation from one another.

• IJR seeks to develop a model to integrate MHPSS and PB to develop sustainable long-term solutions.
Peacebuilding:
• Interdisciplinary in nature, approach and in terms of the professional backgrounds
• Builds on available local strengths, resources and cultural riches
• **Principles**: do-no-harm, impartiality, inclusivity, participatory, long-term, multiplicity of possible entry points, transformative practice, non-violence.
• **Tools & methodologies**: conflict analysis, mediation, negotiation, facilitation, dialogue, storytelling, art, sports etc
• **Key concepts**: cycles of violence; direct, cultural and structural violence; peace as system/ as systemic, peace and justice and transitional justice (i.e. truth telling, punitive and restorative justice, reparations, memorialisation, reconciliation), ‘healing’,
• IJR’s work with conflict affected communities in SA and Africa shows that without addressing the psychological legacies of violent conflict; people’s readiness and willingness to reconcile is reduced and conflict is likely to continue
• **BUT**: peacebuilders do not (yet) have the tools and knowledge to respond adequately to these needs.
TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED APPROACH: IJRs WORK SO FAR

• 2015: Project starts with international inception conference
• 2016-2018 Research agenda
  • Literature review
  • Mapping study
  • Special issue of journal Intervention
  • Formation of IJR Expert Reference Group
• 2019: Co-creation workshops in South Africa, Kenya and Zimbabwe
• 2020: Draft handbook and draft pilot training in collaboration with Africa University, Zimbabwe
IJR’s ‘CO-CREATION WORKSHOP’ METHODOLOGY

• Brings together practitioners from both fields
• Inclusive, participatory, encouraging of vulnerability as basis of trust-building
• Learning about one another, with one another
• Enables surfacing of cultural and contextual nuances
• Regular, structured and inter-disciplinary dialogue as a core foundation for a professional rapprochement between the fields.
CHALLENGES TO INTEGRATION & COLLABORATION

• Lack of knowledge about the other field and how it works
• Mutual stereotypes and misconceptions
• Professional silo’s/ ‘us’ and ‘them’ (fear?)
• Competition for resources
• Donors don’t fund the work/ are unfamiliar with integration/ want quick fixes
• Perception that MHPSS affects women and children/ survivors of SGBV; not everyone
• How to challenge stigma?
• How to build on local cultural practices that could complement an integrated approach?
CHALLENGES TO INTEGRATION & COLLABORATION (2)

• Need for knowledge production and research in the global south but in Africa in particular.

• Context specificity is a must; one-size fits all approach to different post-conflict settings and organisational setups is unlikely to work.

• How do globally accepted terms translate into local contexts and languages (i.e. trauma/mental health/depression/ social cohesion/ reconciliation etc)
IMAGINING AN INTEGRATED APPROACH-HOW?

- Get to know one another (demystify/ talk about what you do/ why you do it/ how you do it).
- Build on commonalities. Nurture a culture of collaboration between the silo’s while protecting the investments (financial and intellectual) made by each field to date.
- Build an evidence base that points to improved outcomes for each field as a result of collaboration and integration.
- Jointly calculate the cost of not collaborating and integrating the fields as well as the benefit of it.
- Collaboration is the bridge to an integrated approach. Constructing interdisciplinary teams to conceptualise, implement and evaluate.
- Develop interdisciplinarity.
- Ensure peacebuilders themselves have addressed their own trauma prior to working in the field.