

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

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DECEMBER 2019



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FOR JUSTICE AND
RECONCILIATION

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.

MHPSS FROM A PEACEBUILDING PERSPECTIVE

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’
- IJRs 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