

## **(DRAFT) PSYCHOSOCIAL PEACEBUILDING GUIDELINES**

### **BACKGROUND**

*In 2015 an international conference was jointly organised by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) and the War Trauma Foundation (WarTrauma) titled 'Healing communities, transforming society: Exploring the interconnectedness between psychosocial needs, practice and peacebuilding'. It was aimed at assessing whether and how the fields of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and peacebuilding (PB) are, or should be, integrated. The conference was built on the March 2014 Special Section of the journal Intervention, guest edited by Brandon Hamber, Elizabeth Gallagher and Peter Ventevogel titled 'Peacebuilding and psychosocial work'. Taking up the findings in the Special Section as well as the recommendations that emerged from the conference (Bubenzer & Tankink, 2015), IJR and WarTrauma have since conducted a systematic literature review and a mapping exercise of global practice while also reaching out and building relationships with individuals and organisations already working in or interested in working in this field. Findings from these processes provide rich evidence that by and large, MHPSS and PB practitioners operating in post-conflict settings acknowledge that an integrated approach is needed in order to interrupt cycles of violence and build sustainable peace.*

*In May 2017, IJR and WarTrauma together with 17 invited expert academics and/or practitioners, from around the world began to develop best-practice guidelines for an integrated approach that reflects the essential theories and practices of each field.*

*This document, which emerged from the convening of the reference group, is a first draft of a set of practice guidelines that are intended to be inclusive, practical and user-friendly.*

*Comments and suggestions are most welcome. In the coming months, the reference group will circulate these draft guidelines to a larger group of selected people for comment. A webinar will be hosted in October 2017 to engage interested stakeholders in a detailed discussion about the origins, development and intended purpose of these guidelines. After the webinar, these guidelines will be released for international public consultation.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

War and violent conflict weaken the social fabric that governs interpersonal and societal relationships and the capacity for recovery, which are essential for building sustainable peace. In the aftermath, the causes of individual and communal conflict might still exist, and may even have worsened as a result of violence during the conflict and because of post-conflict socio-economic, political, and leadership issues. The ability of individuals and societies to cope with the on-going effects of these complex conditions often exceed individual and collective coping mechanisms. This is aggravated by the lack of adequate services and support systems. It is important to acknowledge that potentially traumatic events have varying impacts on each affected individual and not all people will experience clinical, trauma-related symptoms. Following traumatic events for some people, positive growth and strength may result. For many people, however, conflict increases mistrust and fear and this creates on-going stress that can result in new cycles of violence and trauma. Implementing MHPSS and PB mechanisms help to ensure the repair of the social fabric that supports people's sense of community and recreates feelings of connectedness. War and violent conflict also destroy economic, political and public institutions and may harm the norms, values and principles that govern human relations. Personal wellbeing and a strong social fabric facilitates effective functioning of the structures, institutions, and activities necessary for building sustainable peace. PB processes address and bridge the tangible (infrastructure, institutions, service delivery) and the less tangible (psychological wellbeing, social cohesion) needs of a post-conflict society. Linking the two fields of PB and MHPSS enables the development of processes that address the whole person (mind, body, and spirit) in all spheres of life within a given context. Empowered individuals can consequently become change agents in conflict and post-conflict contexts.

Given the lack of a robust body of empirical research linking the fields of MHPSS and PB, the proposed guidelines are mainly based on theories of PB and MHPSS, as well as assumptions derived from the long-term experience and best practice of academics and practitioners working in both fields in active and post-conflict environments. The general assumption underlying these guidelines is that approaches integrating MHPSS and PB are more likely to lead to sustainable peace and better mental health and psychosocial wellbeing, which are mutually reinforcing in enabling people to resist acts of direct violence. It is also assumed that wounded individuals and communities who have not processed their responses to trauma (individual, collective and transgenerational trauma) are less likely to be able to resist the political, economic, cultural and social pressures that may lead to subsequent cycles of violence and doing harm to oneself and others.

## 2. THE RELEVANT KEY CONCEPTS

**MHPSS** is defined in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines for MHPSS in Emergency Settings (IASC, 2007p. 1) as “any type of local or outside support that aims to protect or promote psychosocial wellbeing and/or prevent or treat mental disorder”. The term ‘psychosocial’ emphasises the dynamic relationship between the psychological aspects of our experience and behavior, and our relationships within a specific context. From this perspective, mental health can be understood as “a dimension of relations between persons and groups more than as an individual state” (Hamber & Gallagher, 2015, p. 3). Interventions in this field range from the provision of basic services and security at the individual and community level to community and family supports; non-specialised (mental health) services and specialised services (IASC, 2007). The psychosocial sensitivity of an intervention is more important to the success of an intervention, than its specific nature (Abeyasekera et al., 2008 in Hamber & Gallagher, 2015, p. 9). MHPSS practitioners are in agreement that MHPSS related activities in (post-) conflict settings should not only focus on assisting individuals and families with ‘problems’, but should also include interventions that build on and strengthen the resilience and coping mechanisms of the communities and society at large and to promote overall wellbeing of individuals and communities (IASC, 2007).

**PB** consists of a range of interrelated processes, actions and tools used to promote just and sustainable social, economic and political structures and relationships – at all levels of society. It is concerned with short term responses to complex and violent conflicts and long-term responses to build the capacity of societies and the conditions that contribute to the prevention of further cycles of violence. PB is an integral part of helping stable societies develop economically, politically, socially, and culturally. Economically, politically, and socially stable societies are the foundation for justice and human flourishing and are built by addressing the intangible and tangible, psychological, relational, and structural factors which shape individuals and society (Hart, 2008).

**Building sustainable peace** is complex and requires much more than establishing or rebuilding mutually dignifying relationships. Legacies of conflict have to be addressed through the development of holistic, multidisciplinary, multidimensional, and context-sensitive programmes that are implemented at all levels of society. This should include the “provision of basic services, security sector reform, restoring core government functions and support to economic revitalisation” (Hamber & Gallagher, 2015, p. 11), based on justice, equality and cooperation. At the same time it supports interpersonal relationships and community support. To implement such programmes, capacity must be built at individual, communal, institutional, and national levels. It also works the other way round; harmful social processes, such as polarisation between groups, discrimination and injustice can undermine psychosocial wellbeing. By addressing these factors, people are more likely to reduce their stress, fear and distrust and learn other ways of coping with these emotions as well as with traumatic experiences and symptoms.

### **3. MAKING THE CASE FOR AN INTEGRATED APPROACH**

Psychosocial practices don't just enhance people's capacity to participate in society, they also help to improve their personal economic situation and increase choices people can make (Hamber & Gallagher, 2015, p. 13). Pursuing such an integrated approach requires the development of a close relationship between the fields of MHPSS and PB. To achieve this, MHPSS and PB practitioners need to be explicit about developing and using methodologies, where relevant, that build on commonalities that are based on joint decision making and resource management and that use a common language. A new term is being offered here to begin to define this rapprochement between the previously distinct and separate fields of MHPSS and PB: Psychosocial Peacebuilding.

#### **3.1. What is psychosocial peacebuilding (PSPB)?**

Psychosocial Peacebuilding (PSPB) is a holistic approach that integrates the theories and practices of MHPSS and PB for the purpose of laying a strong foundation for sustainable PB in (post-) conflict settings (Hart & Colo, 2014). In this context psychosocial approaches includes both mental health and mental illness which are caused or enhanced through conflict. The composite MHPSS emphasises that interventions work both on approaches to heal trauma and addressing the PS needs of people including daily stressors and other conflict-related challenges.

#### **3.2. Why MHPSS and PB work should be integrated**

The objectives that underpin the fields of MHPSS and PB are mutually reinforcing and complementary: attaining positive peace enhances MHPSS which in turn and over time disrupts cycles of violence. Using an integrated approach allows for a comprehensive and systematic approach to transformational change; one that addresses the interaction of intra- and inter- personal, political, organisational, economic and cultural elements of post-conflict societies. This approach is necessary in (post-) conflict societies as well as in societies that have deeply embedded inequities that are grounded in structural and cultural violence.

#### **3.3. Why MHPSS professionals should be integrating PB objectives into their work**

The effects of war, violent conflict and deep inequities sustained through structural and cultural violence in society are complex. Therefore, the rebuilding of any society should take place in a holistic, interdisciplinary and intersectoral way. Transformative PB refers to working towards deep changes in society. It is multifaceted and integrated and aims to impact multiple levels of society from the individual and family through to the organisation, community, and nation. Like MHPSS interventions, PB processes focus on (re)building safety and trust, (re)storing relationships and using dialogue to mobilise communities towards (re)building a safe and productive environment. The aim is to create societies able to prevent, cope with and recover from the impacts of violence. Recognising this, and situating MHPSS in a larger context, to which PB activities are complementary, is important to the constructive change process that concerns both fields. Meeting the physical and material needs of communities through integrated development models is a key component of MHPSS, as is addressing cultural repression, human rights violations, and mental health problems.

Greater involvement in the PB field by MHPSS actors is likely to inform and enrich the MHPSS field with more sensitivity and awareness towards the root causes, legacy and driving factors of war and violent conflict that make up the affected target society. If both fields were to work together more closely, a holistic approach that works on several societal levels at the same time would be more likely to emerge. PB recognises and acknowledges the impact of leadership on identity formation and social relations. MHPSS could support PB by addressing the potential traumatic memory of individuals at all levels of society (including at a leadership level) in order to develop sustainable PB processes.

Using an integrated approach can enable greater awareness about policies and peace processes that are relevant for mental health and psychosocial wellbeing, and peace processes may be designed and implemented in a way that positively affects mental health and psychosocial wellbeing among conflict affected populations.

### 3.4. Why PB practitioners should be committed to integrating MHPSS into their work

Accumulated individual and historical trauma can affect reasoning, behaviour, and attitudes people bring with them into PB processes. If people have not processed traumatic events it can result in a repetition of cycles of violence either in the home environment through domestic violence or as part of revenge. People may then be less effective in the implementation of communal reconstruction and PB efforts. This could result in low self-esteem, low self-imaging, and disrupted communities, which, if unaddressed, can be among the factors that fuel violence. In post-conflict societies, these psychosocial impacts can manifest in increased levels of violence in the private and public sphere, which undermine PB. Deep, inner psychological woundedness can prevent people from engaging constructively in conflict transformation and PB programs which aim to address the root causes of conflict, including economic, political and identity issues. The consequences of the past violence can manifest biologically, emotionally, psychologically or relationally and therefore need to be addressed in order to support the effective design and functioning of structures and institutions being established as part of PB activities. PB theory suggests that there is a need for personal transformation to support political and economic transformation.

Trauma healing and psychosocial support can thus play a critical enabling role for effective participation of people in the four sectors of PB identified by the United Nations: security and public order, economic recovery and reconstruction, political governance and participation, and justice and reconciliation. Psychosocial interventions can facilitate the creation of spaces for dialogue where the identities and narratives of survivors, bystanders, and perpetrators can be transformed into new functional identities and integrated narratives, which can support peace and reconciliation. This builds on the resilience and strengths of communities to support the potential for PB in the face of mass destruction. By focusing on the collective as well as the individual, this psychosocial transformation can help to build more peaceful communities. Psychosocial interventions can therefore contribute to the long-term sustainability of peace.

## 4. PSPB: A THEORY OF CHANGE

If PB is informed by MHPSS it is more effective. And if trauma healing and MHPSS are informed by a deep understanding of the causes and impacts of direct, structural and cultural violence, the approaches that work with individuals and small groups are more appropriately aligned with the community context. In other words, if we practice PSPB to improve the wellbeing of individuals and communities, then we will be able to move towards the formation of more economically, politically and socially stable and peaceful societies (see the image on the left for a preliminary visual representation).



The proposed theoretical holistic framework is a combination of the socio-ecological framework and social capital framework. This comprehensive approach recognises the importance of the individual and network (power) relationships while placing significant emphasis on both the social context and the broader environment in which individuals operate at the micro-, meso- and macro-levels of society (family, community, society) (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). In this framework, changes are not linear, as in an action-result, but circular; i.e. it is expected that behavioural change in an individual will stimulate and encourage family and community members to react differently from past behaviour and this will, in return, stimulate people to consolidate these changes. It pays attention to the complex

interplay between individuals, relationships, community and societal factors and aims to prevent violence through recognising the overlap between societal structures.

Including the Social Capital framework emphasizes the importance of paying attention to power relations in the field of PSPB. Social capital refers to all the knowledge and skills found in a group, and all the links between individuals, families, friends and groups. The concept can be used to describe a number of phenomena - such as trust, shared values and norms, social cohesion, participation and power relations and confidence in governance - pertaining to social relations at the individual and societal levels (Macinko & Starfield, 2001). Attention is given specifically to the levels inherent in the social capital framework namely: social bonding, social bridging and social linking (Woolcock, 1998; Sliep; 2014).

Social capital has been thought of as a web of cooperative relationships between people that facilitates the resolution of collective problems (Coleman, 1990). Active participation and co-ordination on all levels are the main mechanisms of social capital and the ecological model to foster peace although violence can also be perpetuated through the use of networks and group identity.

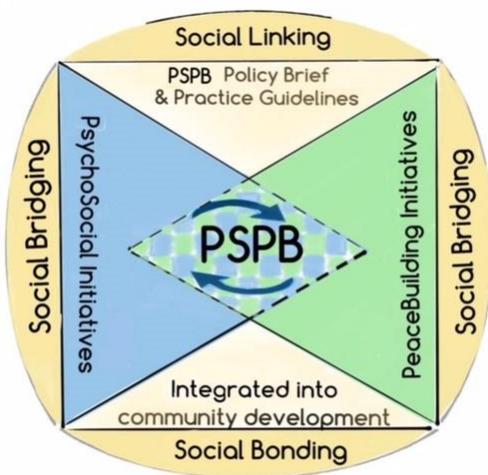
Social bonding refers to the bonds between people that have more or less the same power (vertical power) such as that between members of a family or ethnic group, on the micro and meso level. These relationships help to manage everyday life. Understanding that the strength of communities depends on the strength of the internal relationships being used as leverage to protect the vulnerable in communities. This is where multi-sectoral development is translated into action with groups and individuals and PSPB initiatives can be integrated into these activities to strengthen individuals and relationships.

Bridging social capital integrates the levels and nature of contact and engagement between different social groups or communities as well as connecting diverse groups with varying levels of access to material and symbolic power. It brings people in contact with resources and benefits that are accrued from having a wide and varied range of social contacts. In dislocated communities, there is generally little evidence of existing trust and support networks amongst different groups, and these would need to be actively

facilitated. At a bridging level (this occurs at the meso and macro level), the ties are weaker but allow groups at a community level to access resources such as between groups or locally established organisations. It is at this level that the PSPB guidelines would be rolled out.

In linking social capital the power relations are vertical and manifest as government interventions or policy decisions. This linking is the interaction between all levels of the socio-ecological model, including national security laws and protection of citizens is necessary for local participants to act. It is difficult to establish peace on one level without incorporating the other levels. For instance, the effectiveness of peace building activities on a social bonding level are likely to have limited effect if the networks on a social bridging level are actively destroyed or there is not yet a peace agreement on

the social linking levels. A PSPB policy brief would be disseminated at this level. The image on the left is a preliminary visual representation of PSPB.



## **5. PRINCIPLES**

All PSPB activities should aim to adhere to the following core principles. These principles have been adapted to the field of PSPB from the IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings and the IASC MHPSS Monitoring and Evaluation guidelines (IASC, 2017: p. 5) as well as findings of the 2012 Alliance for PB mapping study 'Peacebuilding 2.0':

1. Ensure respect for human rights, dignity and equity for all affected persons, particularly protecting those at heightened risk of human rights violations.
2. Build trust and social cohesion to enable the inclusion and full participation of the local population.
3. Do no harm in relation to physical, social, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being and ensure that actions a.) respond to the assessed needs, b.) are committed to evaluation and scrutiny, c.) support culturally appropriate responses and d.) acknowledge the various power relations between groups participating in (post)conflict responses and PB.
4. Build on available resources and develop capacities by working with local groups, encouraging local organising and leadership, supporting self-help / self-empowering processes and strengthening existing resources.
5. Integrate support systems so that MHPSS or PB are not stand-alone interventions operating outside other response measures or systems.
6. Acknowledge that people are affected by violent conflict and trauma in different ways and require different kinds of multi-layered supports which are ideally implemented concurrently.

## **6. PSYCHOSOCIAL PEACEBUILDING: PRACTICE GUIDELINES**

### **6.1. Maximise participation**

- 6.1.1. PSPB interventions should be structured in ways that maximizes the participation and 'voice' of all involved, including those who were traditionally marginalised, (such as children, people with disabilities or mental disorders and women, amongst others). They should be designed in ways that give communities the privilege and responsibility to define, lead, own, benefit from and sustain whatever change is proposed for their lived experience through a process which draws on and seeks to enhance local capacity.
- 6.1.2. Participation should be based on arrangements that are fair to all concerned. Power is related to local ownership. PSPB should acknowledge and be sensitive to the origin and manifestation of power relations and how they impact on conflict transformation processes.

### **6.2. Contextual sensitivity**

- 6.2.1. Each community has indigenous knowledge, structures and resources, which are mobilised after conflict for prevention and conflict resolution. PSPB interventions should build on and complement existing structures and resources in order to contribute to social, economic and political reconstruction and to psychosocial restoration such as social cohesion, wellbeing etc\_. (Traditional) Harmful practices, as well as structural and culturally violent narratives that undergird direct violence, and externally induced harm should be addressed in and with the communities involved. As far as possible, people should be assisted to claim their rights and necessary (health) care, as well as to activate available psychosocial support.
- 6.2.2. PSPB should give full attention to both tangible (infrastructure, service delivery) and intangible (feelings of stress, emotions, mental problems, fear) factors addressing the whole person (mind, body and spirit) within a given and structural context.
- 6.2.3. PSPB interventions should acknowledge and factor in the way in which history, beyond the current violence, is likely to have shaped each contemporary context. Factoring in legacies of enslavement, colonialism and other forms of oppression and marginalisation, and recognising

the transmission of historical trauma and memory over generations, are critical to the transformation process.

- 6.2.4. PSPB should work on the base of equality and inclusivity and must be sensitive to age, caste, class, ethnicity, gender, race and sexual orientation.
- 6.2.5. PSPB interventions should be designed in a way that acknowledges that gender transformative PB requires more than awareness and sensitivity (in planning and implementation processes). They must also include the assets, skills and wisdom of women and men, girls and boys and transgender individuals in a qualitative way (e.g. more than just counting the number of women and men addressed).
- 6.2.6. Language can be intimidating and exclusionary. PSPB interventions should use inclusive language and ensure that communication between and within different actors, sectors and participants is based on a common understanding of the relevant concepts in order to be highly relevant to the change process.
- 6.2.7. PSPB should acknowledge and be sensitive to the origin and manifestation of power relations and how they impact on conflict transformation processes. Social power relations exist beyond governance arrangements and should be understood and acknowledged in the formal, informal, linguistic, and symbolic as well as structural and governance ways in which they manifest.

### **6.3. Assessment and Interventions**

- 6.3.1. PSPB approaches and interventions should begin by studying the available or conducting baseline contextual assessments in the field of MHPSS and PB in a given context.
- 6.3.2. PSPB approaches should assess the field in terms of which (local and international) actors are doing what, where and how and identify the formal and informal leaders and key persons in the communities applying a context sensitive approach and building on existing resources.
- 6.3.3. PSPB should translate assessments into approaches and interventions that are based on informed and strategic choices, agreed upon theories of change and an overall strategic plan.
- 6.3.4. PSPB approaches and interventions should attend to cultural, structural and direct violence as well as the daily stressors affecting people, acknowledging them as obstacles to peace and MH and wellbeing.
- 6.3.5. PSPB interventions must be sensitive to the multiple identities and self-interpretations of people and refrain from engaging people as stereotypes under a single label (i.e. traumatised, ex-prisoner, refugee etc.) which reduces their identity to a single part of their broader identity and experiences.
- 6.3.6. PSPB approaches must recognise that all interventions with individuals and communities have implications. Therefore, PSPB needs to apply and engage with the set of lenses and awareness that address emotion, meaning, identity, power, structural issues (history) and relations (such as gender, class, caste, etc).
- 6.3.7. PSPB approaches should refrain from short-term responses to complex and violent conflicts. Such conflicts require long-term responses in order to build local capacity and to prevent the recurrence of similar violence in the present and future (conflict prevention). Make sure that there is the necessary, equal, attention and time for prevention and response.

### **6.4. Coordination**

- 6.4.1. PSPB approaches should activate or establish an interdisciplinary, integrated and multidimensional coordination team with resources from multiple fields to strengthen coordination, cooperation and participation and to integrate services and support.
- 6.4.2. PSPB approaches should ensure an awareness of who is doing what, where and how and ensure coordination to prevent duplication across disciplines and sectors.
- 6.4.3. PSPB approaches should identify and include formal and informal leaders in the affected communities in the planning and roll-out of interventions.

- 6.4.4. PSPB approaches should co-ordinate activities that will ensure advocacy among disciplines, sectors and organisations.
- 6.4.5. PSPB approaches should be accountable to people first, then to donors; and make this commitment explicit.

### **6.5. Mobilisation and support**

- 6.5.1. PSPB approaches should not place expectations on people that exceed their capacity. Neither does it impose limited expectations on people and groups based on historically biased assessments and projections. Rather, interventions should be sensitive to and recognize people's strengths and limitations and that people continue to develop and grow.
- 6.5.2. PSPB approaches should include a human rights and protection factor based on legal frameworks and existing policies.
- 6.5.3. PSPB approaches should facilitate conditions for shared community ownership and ability to respond to emerging issues.

### **6.6. Monitoring and Evaluation**

- 6.6.1. PSPB approaches should initiate participatory systems for monitoring and evaluation which are inclusive of all those involved in the process.
- 6.6.2. PSPB approaches should define indicators according to measurable activities.
- 6.6.3. PSPB approaches should create opportunities for ongoing critical reflection.
- 6.6.4. PSPB approaches should ensure that assessment, evaluation and monitoring is done in an ethical and rigorous manner that is appropriate to each context.
- 6.6.5. PSPB approaches should develop standards to ensure high quality responses from a variety of stakeholders throughout the project cycle.

### **6.7. Information dissemination**

- 6.7.1. Mainstream PSPB into existing humanitarian and development sectors through the dissemination of best practices, results and recommendations.
- 6.7.2. Develop guidelines that take into consideration PB and psychosocial support in different sectors in any particular geographic area.
- 6.7.3. Ensure these formulated guidelines are widely accessible.
- 6.7.4. Use evidence or practice-based outcomes to advocate for policy formation at the local, national, regional and international level.

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