

## **October 2014, Counseling on grief, bereavement and trauma at Salaam School, Jabalya- Gaza Strip**

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### **What we did?**

Ten days of counselling intervention with the board of teachers at Salaam School, involving almost 20 teachers in group, individual activities. Two home visits.

The intervention aimed at intervening on traumatic experiences after the last 50 days aggression, hypothesizing that the role of teachers with kids in recovering traumas after war is crucial one, but before providing teachers with practical instruments to work with the pupils at schools, the workers need a space to enact skills of survival and resources to cope with their own traumas.

Three main actions have been implemented:

1. Group Counselling: looking at the salaam teachers'community as protective factors to facilitate the individuals in coping with harsh war experiences.
2. Individual counselling: one shot session to provide the teachers with a personal safe space, where entering more in depth in personal stories.
3. Home visits: when the teachers saw their family members as particularly vulnerable after war, we provided a one section intervention at home.

### **Instruments**

We used mainly narrative tools and experiential activities to work much more on resources rather than on symptoms management or reduction. Cooperative plays, story line events' calendars (individual and collective), messages to the international teachers' community, Pennabeker's diaries, narrative in vivo exposure, family constellations were the main instruments together with the classical systemic interview in individual settings (See early Report written in October).

### **Results**

The clinical observation showed an evident efficacy of the intervention on stress management. The teachers' feedback resulted very positive: they reported to be able for the very first time to speak in a so detailed manner of the war events. The general feeling was to have found the group of teachers as great resource to elaborate suffering and bed thoughts. Discovering abilities, unexpected, or not rationalized,

used during the attacks to cope with terror and despair, provided the teacher with a feeling of restored self-efficacy and hope for the future.

## Recommendations

In the light of the early intervention did in October a series of recommended actions might be implemented:

- 1) The future interventions must alternate group works involving the whole board of Salaam school teachers and individual sessions to follow-up the natural abilities of recovery of the teachers. Namely:
  - a. A weekly group therapy for teachers (2 h. and half for session) – better if accompanied with play and de-briefing activities (relaxation tasks, cooperative plays, and narrative experiential activities) aimed at maintaining and improve the protective effect of the group on the individuals. The conductor must be focused on positively underlying the importance of cooperation, mutual trust, confidence for the group could be helpful to overcome difficulties and help the children.
  - b. A safe space at school (e. g 4 hours once a week) where the teachers can ask for individual counselling (spontaneous demand).
- 1) A one session interview for each teacher is recommended to follow up the spontaneous process of recovery after war. It would be important asking for informed consent (oral or written) to audio-record the session, in order to evaluate the counselling process.
- 2) Important themes to work on:
  - Restoring Sumud and resistance in teachers at individual and collective levels;
  - Working on motherhood as protective factor;
  - Working on personality traits and family characteristic as protective factors;
  - Promoting positive emotions and abilities to manage the events as protective factors;
  - In case the teachers are not married working on social stigma and the importance to be in a protective, not judging environment (e.g. Salaam school as safe place) to enforce self-recovery skills;
  - Overcoming the prejudice of extreme vulnerability of the children, stressing their ability to cope with suffering, and the scaffolding role of the teachers.
- 1) Administering the same self-reports we used in T1, T2 is an effective tool to check the process out. It could be done both during the individual intervention and in collective sessions (recommended).

Dr. Guido Veronese is available a inter-vision every fifteen days for two hours with Dr. Hosama Hamdouna, and available for any further clarification.