

Post War Trauma Counseling Training Report

March 2006

Training Report By:

International Aid Services

Somalia Programme

For:

SAACID - Australia

INTRODUCTION

Somalia has been in Civil war for the last 15 years. The war erupted as various clan-based military factions competed for control after the collapse of Barre's regime. The victims and the perpetrators of the terrible violence are still living together in the same society. The communities are still crippled by poverty, unemployment, lack of education, health, welfare and inadequate resources to improve their situation. The war has left deep scars and negatively impacted the lives of the people of Somalia both socially and mentally.

BACKGROUND TO THE COURSE

Trauma following war, conflicts or violence is psychosocial as the trauma affects both the psychological and social perspectives of an individual. The term psychosocial “attempts to express the recognition that there is always a close, ongoing circular interaction between an individual's psychological state and his or her social environment” This demands that we think not only of the social context of war and its individual consequences, but also how the social context influences individuals.

War and the violence thereof is unique in so far as it not only targets individuals, but the violence impacts on whole communities and often society at large. In addition to inflicting psychological and physical harm, wars often aims to undermine the social relationships between individuals, as well as between individuals and society at large. Wars are laden with social meaning telling victims how others value (or devalue) them as human beings and it communicates to them their place in society.

It is important to bear in mind therefore that trauma arising from a war situation is not simply a collection of symptoms, rather trauma associated with political conflict is largely about the destruction of individual and/or the social and political structures of a society.

When violence seeps into everyday life, then there is always the possibility that as a society comes out of conflict the residue of violence will remain. Violence generally continues to exist within the social fabric of societies coming out of conflict for decades to come.

With the foregoing, trauma assistance and counselling is important because if not managed properly, traumatic situations can have life-altering consequences for individuals, communities and ultimately the whole society, and can lead to the development of incapacitating symptoms.

OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

Main objective:

*Post war trauma Report Mogadishu Somalia March 2006 Implemented by IAS-Somalia
Programme for SAACID - Australia*

Healing and transformation of individuals and society and mending of relationships through a 3 day post war trauma counseling for 512 militias.

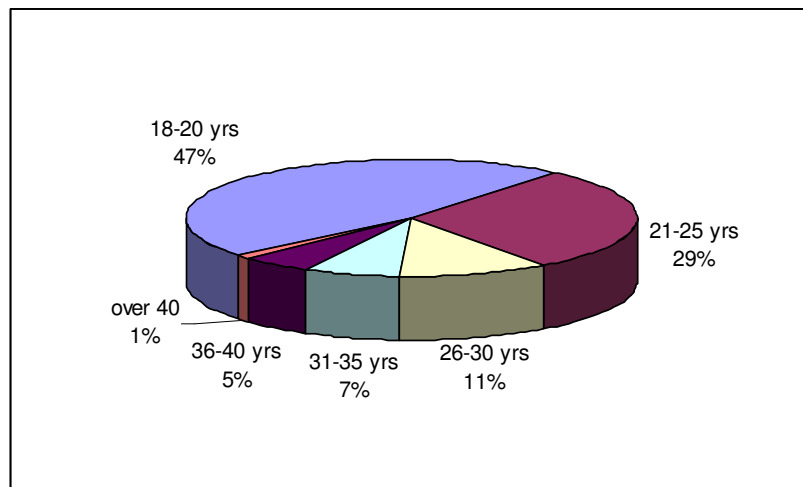
Specific objectives:

1. To enable participants gain an understanding of the impact of conflict on them and to be aware of the dangers a “culture of violence” may bring in a war situation.
2. To equip and empower participants with the necessary information to be self aware on how to identify and deal with problems arising out of war and conflicts

TARGET GROUP

The participants addressed were an audience of 512 militia involved in the DDR (Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration programme) from 16 districts of Mogadishu.

The target group was selected by the district commissioners of ages ranging from 18 years to over 41 years



COURSE DESCRIPTION AND CONTENT

The course delivered a great deal of depth and breadth in the various topics, all of it essential to addressing the subtle, individual and insidious impact of trauma on all those living in conflict.

DESCRIPTION

The course was intended to benefit 512 demobilized soldiers attending numeracy and literacy classes; however some SAACID staff and SAACID school teachers attended.

The militia group was divided into 14 groups A-N. The course covered counseling topics applicable to the militia and the community as a whole. More specifically the course was aimed at enabling the participants to identify, assess and be healed of their stresses and traumatic situations (from victim to survivor and wounded healers) and be finally transformed.

COURSE CONTENT

In order to realize the targeted outcome of the training, the course content focused on:

- (i) Introduction to war and its impact
- (ii) Self – worth
- (iii) Stress, Trauma and Bitter roots
- (iv) Communication
- (v) Grief
- (vi) Forgiveness
- (vii) Seed and vision
- (viii) Prejudice

COURSE APPROACH

1.1 The course

The participants benefited from exposure to a carefully designed training approach used by experienced IAS consultants.

1.2 Presentation

The training was conducted by three facilitators and demanded translation from English into Somali.

The training methodology was mainly participatory in nature thus availing the participants the opportunity to share their life stories and express feelings, emotions and ideas as a first step towards healing. This was through lectures, brain storming, discussions, real life examples and skits. Each new group began with an ice breaker on day 1 with an aim to facilitate people getting acquainted and allow people to trust and interact more. At the beginning of each day, a recap of the previous day was briefly made. Participants discussed the previous day's topics, singling out what was good and exciting but also the challenging topics.

1.3 Materials

The course materials included: hand outs in form of prepared notes this was only given to SAACID staff and teachers. Other materials used for the

sessions included flipcharts, markers, masking tapes and skit props (balloons, cups, rubber bands, ropes)

1.4 Outcomes of the course

The course on post war trauma counseling was able to achieve the following immediate outcomes:

- 6 classes (A-F) of militias ranging from between 28-36 participants had 3 days counseling sessions.
- 3 classes (G-I) with had only one day session out of three days.
- SAACID staff and SAACID school teachers underwent a 2 day compressed post war trauma counseling session.
- Participants got an understanding of how war affects their lives of people.
- Participants demonstrated the ability to promote the lessons learned to their families which in turn would positively affect their communities by assessing their own situations and willing to have healthier relationships.

TRAINING SESSIONS

A summary of the course sessions (what the course covered)

1. Introduction to war and its impact

Objectives: To explain to the participants the meaning of war and get feedback of why they think it continues

- War is devastating and it wounds the body and destroys the spirit.
- What is in our hearts influences our thoughts (what we think), feelings (how we feel) and our actions (what we do or say)
- War exists within the minds of ordinary people and the internalization of the values of war and violence is not surprising given the demands of growing up and living in a violently divided society.

2. Self worth

Objective: To demonstrate what is inside of us is what we pass on to others.

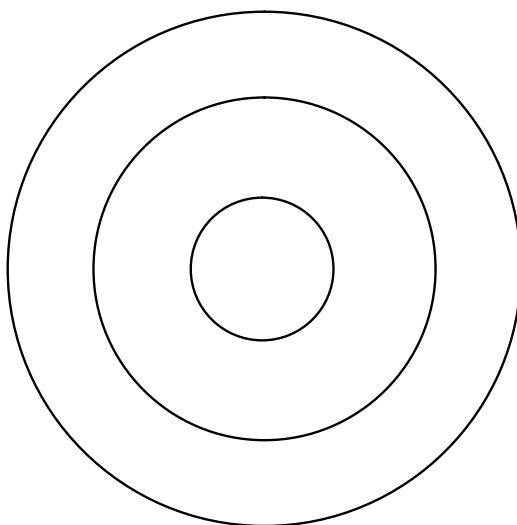
- The belief that our life has value and significance and our God given worth may be altered by the influences around us.
- Empty cup (low self esteem)
- Full cup (healthy self esteem)
- Characteristics of people with empty and full cups
- Dignity and self esteem as ingredients in the healing process

3. Introduction to Stress and Trauma and its implications

Objective: To demonstrate how stress and trauma affects the whole being and how bitter judgments can arise out of this

- Differences between stress and trauma
- Signs and symptoms of stress and trauma

- Effects of Stress and Trauma (physically, emotionally, spiritually, within the environment (in the community and nation) using the person profile circles and piercing depths



- Ineffective ways of dealing with stress
- Passivity and aggressive responses to trauma and deep hurt
- Bitter roots arising from hatred, anger, revenge and how to deal with them

4. Communication

Objective: Communication as a reflection of the impact of trauma on our personality

- Meaning of communication and what it entails
- Types of communication
- Levels of communication
- How to improve our communication

5. Grief

- Introduction to loss and grief
- Stages of grief
- Finding where we are and what the feelings are
- Victim's recovery process
- Victim's reintegration process

6. Forgiveness

Objective: For participants to understand that forgiveness is a process and an act of restoration that does not depend on our feelings but is an act of

the will.

- Telling our stories
- Meaning of forgiveness
- Common symptoms of the lack of forgiveness
- The need for forgiveness
- Steps to forgiveness

7. Prejudice and words

Objective: To identify common prejudices within our community setting

- Examples of prejudices
- The power of words
- Reversing prejudices

8. Vision and Seed

Objective: The wounded healer, we are healed with a mission, to heal others.

- Healing
- Sowing our seed

ISSUES RAISED AND OBSERVATIONS

- All the militias trained were men. This may have been attributed by the fact that the Somali culture does not allow women to be involved in direct fighting.
- Topics of concern sparked heated discussions an indicator that the participants were identifying with the issues raised.
- There was general satisfaction with both the quality and content of the course however, the time allocated was too short to explore all areas too deeply.
- Violence is legitimized as a means of either maintaining the status quo, sustaining power or achieving change. When the use of violence as a “legitimate” way to solve problems permeates a society, a “culture of violence” is developed. It is the culture of violence that the participants found a challenge to reverse.
- Because of the low levels of education and understanding, more time was taken explaining the topics.
- The training period was too short.

Recommendations

Whereas IAS has taken a strategic step in the promotion of transformation to individuals through the trauma counseling training, the following recommendations were made by the team:

- A follow up mechanism should be put in place to evaluate the changes over time and impact of the training conducted for militias.

- Need to target key influential people for the training as it was felt the impact would be far reaching as the information could easily trickle down to the subjects.
- Trauma counseling should be incorporated into the militia as well as normal school curriculum so as to target the girls and women who also suffer the brunt of the war.
- Future sessions should incorporate smaller participants per class (between 8 and 10) as group therapy to enable daily assessment and quality of progress for the individuals.
- Staff involved in the translation of the training could be used to train the remaining groups of militias.
- Simplified pamphlets/booklets translated into Somali on the training done should be availed to the militias and other necessary beneficiaries.