

TRAUMA COUNSELLING IN SCHOOLS

LESSONS LEARNT

KITOVU MOBILE AIDS HOME CARE, COUNSELLING AND ORPHANS PROGRAMME

MEDICAL MISSIONARIES OF MARY

Masaka, Rakai & Ssembabule Districts, Uganda

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Editorial Desk

The Psychologists believe that many adults have problems that can be traced to unresolved traumatic childhood experiences. It is from this background that the training of teachers to equip them with knowledge and skills to identify and counsel children in schools traumatised as a result of HIV/AIDS was started by Kitovu Mobile AIDS Home Care, Counselling and Orphans Programme (MAHCOP) in April 2002. This is done in Masaka and Rakai Districts of South Central Uganda.

On this note, we welcome all on board to MAHCOP learning processes. We believe that the lessons learnt these past years are worth sharing with our partners keeping in mind too that learning is a continuous process. We shall look at what worked, how, when, where and why. We do hope that this project locally adapted would be beneficial to Ministries of Education, Gender and Social Development, NGOs and CBOs, and can also be duplicated in other areas as we work to improve the lives of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC).

Due to an increasing number of OVC as a result of HIV/AIDS, Trauma Counselling is one of the urgently needed interventions that can help us to effectively meet emotional needs of OVC thereby supplementing on other social services.

Training teachers in trauma counselling rotates around helping in- school -youth share their pains; deal with unresolved traumatic experiences, helping them to make informed choices/decisions for the future as well as promoting and building resilience in them. Although the target group for this project is the in- school-youth, it also helps the teachers to deal with their unresolved traumatic experiences through receiving counselling services provided by MAHCOP Senior Counsellors. Teachers trained in Trauma Counselling given the experiences they have also help fellow teachers in dealing with different problems they face.

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Trauma counselling training for teachers involves imparting the skills of effective listening, ability to ask and answer questions as well as coming to the level of the child through information giving. Showing positive attitudes to the child, believing in the child, expressing warmth, being non-judgmental, the ability to be consistent, applying the right skills without betraying the child's trust and keeping confidentiality are key to helping the traumatized child.

We would like to appreciate and acknowledge our partners Kindernothilfe (KNH) who funded our pilot project in Trauma Counselling and Ireland Aid for the three year financial support given to us to run the same project. We also thank the in-school- youth for allowing us to be part of their lives as well as Head teachers and Trauma Counsellor Teachers who work hard despite their busy schedules.

Our gratitude would be incomplete without acknowledging the special contribution and support of Sr. Ursula Sharpe, MMM, MAHCOP Staff, District Education Officers of Masaka and Rakai Districts as well as the Local Council and Religious Leaders in the project target sub-counties.

For all who have contributed in one way or the other that our children ♦ may have life and life in all its fullness, we say thank you.

Itoro Etokakpan, MMM.

Trainer in-charge of case supervision.

MAHCOP TRAUMA COUNSELLING TRAINING OVERVIEW

The most expressive and simple definition of Trauma is ♦ when our ability to respond to threat is overwhelmed ♦ as a result of ♦ experiencing or witnessing an event involving actual or threatened death, serious injury, or threat to the physical integrity of oneself or others ♦. When these things happen and our bodies react or carry out normal reactions ♦ responding to these abnormal situations with symptoms like restlessness, flashbacks, hyper-alertness to similar sounds, unusual quick movements etc; and these reactions continue for long period of time, one is said to be traumatized.

The trauma counselling project takes six months to complete the theory and practical training. The training is done in four residential phases, which takes fourteen days. Depending on when the teacher trainees are less busy, one of the

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phases is carried out within five consecutive days and the rest of the phases are three days each. The trainees present six cases every fortnight.

History and process

The Trauma Counselling Project started in 2002 as a pilot project when the counsellors of MACHOP could no longer cope with the increased demand for counselling services. The general idea at the time was to train parents/guardians in basic counselling skills to be able to help the traumatized children in their homes. However, after discussion with parents/guardians it was finally agreed that since children spend most of their time with teachers in schools, it was most appropriate to train the teachers in the skills needed to help these children.

On the basis of the experiences gained, the Ireland Aid supported trauma programme started in 2003 and a training package was developed (still in draft form) for the general training of teachers in Basic Counselling Skills which focuses on introduction to trauma, self-awareness, building a helping relationship, communication skills and introduction to a counselling model.

The idea of trauma counselling was developed to help the children express their emotional pain as a result of the effects of HIV/AIDS. The trauma counselling has four main phases which runs for six months and focuses on three major themes: Trauma, Basic Counselling Skills and other child related issues. So far the project operates in two districts of Masaka and Rakai in two selected sub-counties each year. Since 2002, 1,065 teachers have been trained in basic counselling skills and out of this, 156 have been trained intensively and 89 teachers are still under intensive training.

After the teachers have completed the third phase of the training, case presentation is carried out and this helps the teachers to effectively put into practice all the theories they have been learning and to refer the most challenging cases to MAHCOP counsellors/trainers.

Sensitisation of parents/guardians is a continuous process as well as Education for Life for the in-school youth. This programme helps the in-school youth to learn more about HIV/AIDS and to acquire life skills for effective living.

The final stage of the project is the follow-up exercise, which also helps the MACHOP staff to monitor the progress of the project.

Steps in implementation

Step - 1 Target Area Selection Criteria

Two sub-counties from within the MAHCOP operational districts of Masaka and Rakai are identified. For comparison purposes, one sub-county that has a rural setting and the other from semi urban are selected. Targeting areas where MAHCOP has other activities helps in complementing counselling services to OVC. This is done in liaison with the District Education Offices of the respective districts.

Step - 2 Community Sensitization

A one-day sensitization workshop for district education officers, local chiefs, local community and Religious leaders, head teachers, guardians and parents is done. This sensitisation workshop for the different mentioned groups focuses on Trauma, its causes, and its effects on children. Through participatory discussions, parents/guardians are helped to appreciate the motives behind the behaviour of the people they live with, in particular, the children. Furthermore, it helps in building an effective support system among the different community stakeholders for easy implementation of the trauma project.

Step - 3 Liaising With the Target Schools

All schools in the targeted areas receive invitation letters for the general training of all teachers in basic counselling skills. Enclosed in the aforementioned letter is a form instructing the head teacher to divide the teachers into three different groups so that each teacher is offered a chance of getting the training while the school timetable is uninterrupted.

Step - 4 Carrying out of Baseline Survey

This helps the counsellors/trainers to know how much the teachers know in the area of counselling and helping children with problems, to be able to plan for the training and to evaluate the improvement in terms of the acquisition of knowledge, attitude change and beliefs among the teacher trainees.

Step - 5 Training all Teachers in Basic Counselling Skills

A three- day training of each group of all the teachers in basic counselling skills is carried out. During this training the Senior Counsellors from MAHCOP identify some of the potential teachers to undergo the intensive training. At the same time, sensitization (on Trauma) of all the children in the schools participating in the training is going on. The children identify the names of teachers they feel comfortable to go to when they have any kind of problem. These names are very important for the identification of teachers for the intensive training.

Step - 6 Identification of Teachers for Intensive Training Course

This exercise takes at least three days in each sub-county. Here the names identified by the children, counsellors and the head teachers are considered. Priority is given to the names identified by the children. In each school two teachers are selected, a man and a woman. The issue of gender balance helps

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the children to have a choice, as some prefer a counsellor of the opposite sex while some prefer those of the same sex. The children being the major stakeholders help us to identify and train the right people who are interested in the welfare of the children.

Step - 7 Intensive Training

Phase one - 5 days.

Introduction to Trauma Counselling.

Basic Counselling Skills

HIV/AIDS and Children

Stress Management

Peer Counselling Group Formation

Grief Counselling

Phase two - 3 days.

Child/Adolescent Counselling

Education For Life

Children's Rights/Child Abuse

Helping Children Make Career Choices

Phase three - 3 days

Counselling The Disabled Child

Major Issues In Family Counselling

Gender Issues

Self Reliance

Phase four - 3 days.

Family Law/Law Of Succession

Human Sexuality

Child/Human Development

Other Child Related Topics

Step - 8 Case Presentations

Each teacher in training has to present six cases, one every fortnight under supervision of the MAHCOP Counsellor/Trainers. This is carried out after phase three of the training to give them the opportunity to put into practice the knowledge and skills acquired. This exercise is part of the final examination and it carries 30%. The teachers are allowed to present the first three cases as a learning process while the last three are scored at 10% each. This 10% is scored according to five points:

- * how the trauma counsellor presents the case
- * how s/he understands the case
- * ability to apply the counselling skills
- * clarity of the case to fellow teacher trainees
- * the trainee's ability to make reasonable contribution to other trainees' case presentations

This helps the teachers to effectively put into practice what they learned during the training and to refer any case they found too challenging to the MAHCOP Counsellors.

Step - 9 Final Examinations

This is done at the end of the course and carries 70% which is added to the 30% case presentation. For a trainee to pass s/he should get 50% and above.

Step - 10 Graduation Ceremony

An official ceremony is held and the trainees are awarded a certificate in Trauma Counselling.

