

## **Trauma Counselling Scheme – Follow up Assessment Report**

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### **Introduction:**

In early 2008 two groups of traumatised people fled to peaceful Kimilili to escape what they had endured in other parts of Kenya. There were those internally displaced people (IDPs) from the post-election violence and those from the land clashes amongst the Sabaot people on Mount Elgon. IcFEM Mission was very fortunate in securing funding for a trauma-counselling programme to help children come to terms with the terrible things they had witnessed when relatives and friends were literally killed in front of them. These children are the survivors not the victims and we seek to highlight their courage, strength, survival skills, perseverance and ability. We seek to help them to grieve and reverse the feeling that they have been abandoned in every sense of the word.

I was asked to be an independent part of the assessment team, as I had no part in the programme, because I am a doctor and was independent.

### **Assessment Process:**

A team of five visited a random selection of the fifteen primary schools where the programme had been implemented. Interviews were conducted with:

- The Head Teacher
- The Teachers who had been trained in counselling
- The local pupils who had been trained in counselling
- The traumatised children

(The interviews with children were conducted one-to-one stressing that the interview was totally confidential and that we wished to hear negative as well as positive reports)

### **Questions Asked:**

Size of school

Number of pupils & class sizes

Number of IDPs accepted, number remaining

Changes seen in school, local pupils and IDP pupils

Negative aspects of the programme

What should be done now?

### **Findings:**

An unexpected finding was that the training had not only benefited the target group, the IDPs, but other local children who had suffered other problems. The teachers and pupils realised that they could have easily suffered a similar fate and valued life and school more. The spiritual life of the schools had improved e.g. in one a Christian Union had been formed. Teachers had learned skills e.g. listening skills not taught them before. The whole school community was now better integrated and counselling one another was a norm. The performance of the whole school had improved. They had become an unexpected asset to the school community.

### **School statistics:**

Schools visited: Sikhedu, Chebukwabi, Siuna, Khwiroro, Chesikaki, Kimabole

School size: 800-1400 pupils

Class size: 40-70

Percentage of IDPs initially in school: 16-27%

Percentage of IDPs remaining in school now: 15-57%

<b>Problem of IDPs</b>	<b>On arrival</b>	<b>Now</b>
Violence	Reacted to others violently	Normal response
Pupils feelings	Angry, resentful, bitter, day dreaming	Appreciates both counselling & material help
Tension in school community	Present	Relaxed
Academic performance	Poor	Better
Concentration	Poor	Normal
IDPs interaction with local pupils	'Picked on', abused	Accepted
Mood	Argumentative, shy, miserable	Happy with life, "changed dramatically"
Self-esteem	Low	Higher
Forgiveness	Absent	Present
Class behaviour	Disruptive	Integrated
Play	Withdrawn, left out	Valued
Uniform provision, blankets, basic needs, etc	Lacked but provided by Mission	Helped in IDP taking part as cause school identity
Health	Problems – treatment at DMCC was very helpful	Normal
Physical appearance	Poor	Improved

#### **Comments from interviews:**

- The trained facilitators performed well and were the foundation of the programme. Expertise spread into the schools from them.
- Those who have lost parents are still not 'normal' children.
- 1 school - Not enough time in busy school schedule to talk to the children. Teachers too busy. Need to sensitise the teachers to make time and convince them this is worthwhile. Others schools did not report this and had 'made' time.
- There was a lack of material resource to absorb the sudden influx of extra pupils e.g. desks, exercise books, pencils, geometric sets, etc.
- There are special cases amongst the IDPs who require extra time and individual attention if they are going to recover from their trauma.
- Whilst you can skill people you cannot force commitment and implementation. Some head teachers, teachers and parents have not been supportive. In Kenya many do things because they expect to personally benefit. Another programme should have a follow-up one-month after implementation.
- The on-going visits of the counselling leaders reassured and supported the children.
- Children had been left behind by their parents who had returned home or to other camps because they did not want to expose their children to the danger. These children often had no local support and are effectively orphans.
- The assisted children desired to help their parents both mentally and materially.
- The peer counsellors do a lot of informal counselling.
- Some children were taken into homes that were hostile to their presence.
- One girl had come pregnant (possibly due to rape) had delivered and dropped out of school.
- IDPs had discovered new talents in education.
- Older local children who acted as counsellors need support themselves.
- One school bought skipping ropes which helped integration of IDPs.

- The Kenyan government has not provided any resources for school levies, etc. Indeed whilst there was help for the post-election IDPs there was none for the Mount Elgon IDPs.
- At one school the IDPs were showing high academic achievement and were first and second ranking in the classes.
- The IDPs were valuable as they shared ideas with other pupils and teachers.
- Some local pastors had given valuable help others had not.
- The local government administration (village elders, assistant chiefs, chiefs, district officers, etc) had valued the counselling programme as it healed the community. The elected representatives (councillors, MPs) had not been involved and had not 'come on board'.

**Recommendations:** The following need to be addressed/supported:

- It was generally felt by all those interviewed that the trauma counselling programme could benefit a wider population e.g. the parents or carers of the children especially particular cases, the traumatised community, etc. Funding should be sought to implement this.
- Teaching parents listening skills would be valuable.
- The orphans particularly require on-going support or to be integrated into a new family.
- Some children require further counselling.
- That fear could only be removed if the Kenyan government solved the underlying problems. Threats to safety remain.
- The problem of all Kenyan primary schools where one teacher has a class of 40-100+ pupils exacerbates the problems of the IDPs. This requires the Kenyan government to employ the unemployed teachers and at least halve class size to improve education.
- One child who was featured in a documentary as a survivor of the killing of thirteen of her family and did not have her identity protected. She is now under threat from those who perpetrated the crime. She requires to be protected in a boarding school.
- That the provision of a small amount of recreation equipment e.g. for sport – skipping ropes, footballs, goal posts, netball balls & rings, volleyball balls & nets would or music would provide natural activities that would increase cohesion between displaced and local children.
- Because the families cannot farm their land they have no income to buy food, clothes, medicines, etc. For example one of the girls I interviewed had gone home from school for lunch but there was no food for her. It would seem that some relief and welfare funding might help relieve in-going stress on these families. The people are relying on charity from the local communities where they have settled.
- The schools were not receiving their levy fees from the IDPs, the IDP children could not afford exam papers, pupils could not progress to standard 8 as they were unable to provide the maize & beans required, IDP pupils could see no prospect of being able to afford secondary school fees. Support is required to ensure continuity of education.
- In future the need to sensitise the local administration and the communities elected representatives should be recognised.

**Conclusion:**

The programme was an overwhelming success producing unexpected benefits whilst remaining in budget. There is much more that can be done by building on this foundation which clearly benefited many more than the target group. We also now have the benefit of 15 trained counsellors.