

The possible models of creative therapies for the child victims of war and armed conflicts

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After war and armed conflicts, the child victims of these events need protection and reintegration. In reality, the physical and psychic consequences of wars on children persist for some time after the war. In this regard, we must prepare the reintegration of these children into society. To reintegrate these children, we must think of both a general course of rehabilitation followed by special rehabilitation according to the child's needs. In this respect, initially, we must initiate psychosocial help to restore the psychological and social development of children and to mitigate the harmful effects of wars. We noted that the content of psychosocial assistance for the child victims of war depends primarily on their particular needs and cultures and their traditions. General rehabilitation must thus rest on the capacity of the children to overcome the difficult conditions in the aftermath of wars. In this regard, the communities, the families, the schools, the teachers and the children themselves must take part in the process of curing these children and their support. Here, we can use certain possible models of creative therapy. For example, the cultural media such as arts of interpretation and arts visual as well as the accounts of the children themselves, the creative word can decrease the psychological problems of the child victims of war and facilitate their rehabilitation in the community.

Key words: child, war, account , cultural media, creative word, rehabilitation

Introduction

Regarding the needs of child victims of war, it is necessary to take certain measures to protect and reintegrate these children. If it is true that whenever the children profit from normal treatment under the conditions of peace, their nutrition is adequate, and their access to the health services is facilitated, however, we should not forget that the consequences of war on certain children persist for a long time and even after the war. For certain authors, the cumulative previous experience of war trauma constitutes a risk factor for continuing PTSD symptoms in children victims of war (Aziz & Panos, 2000).

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In this regard, alongside the rebuilding of the houses, schools and other necessary services, we must prepare the reintegration of these children in the community. If the child still suffers from physical problems, we must facilitate his access to appropriate treatments. If s/he suffers from psychic and psychological problems, we must help him to eradicate these problems. Thus, the programs for the support of children touched by war should take account of the capacity of recovery, the functional capacity and the wellbeing of these children. The communities the families, the schools, the teachers and the children themselves must take part in the process of curing and supporting these children. In this paper we hope to study the possible models of the creative therapies for the child victims of war in two different axes i.e., (a) the Cultural Media and (b) the account, the creative word (Minou, 2005).

Cultural Media

Arts of the expression constitute invaluable tools in the process of cure: therapies by dance, movement, theatre, the oral tradition, music, painting and drawing, and national folk arts met a success without precedent when the direct oral expression appeared too painful. It is advisable here to offer art and play therapy for young child victims of war (Yule & Canterbury, 1994). According to Graça Machel, the media and the other means of communication can be used to poke the conflicts, but they can prove very useful for the protection of the children, and support peace and comprehension between people. The forms of communication as the newspaper industry, the radio, video, television, theatre and the Internet can be used to join millions of people, and can play a very useful role in humane programs (Machel, 2001). For example, in Mozambique and elsewhere, photography and computers made it possible to bring together the families. The independent media can provide reliable information on the conflicts and be used for the efforts to bring the politicians, the governments, and the organisations of the United Nations and the different organs interested to give an account of their acts. The media are an excellent means for bringing the children and the teenagers to be dealt with and to take part in decision-making, Community planning, development and political debates.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) guarantees the rights of the child to the freedom of expression, participation, access to information and leisure. Communications can be used to promote all these objectives. Actually, the educational potential of communication is obvious. It can generate an "educational medium" and becomes itself an object of education. Education is also an essential instrument to learn with better communicating and benefiting better from exchanges. This is why one can say that between communication and education, there is a reciprocal relation, which grows richer constantly.

From this point of view, the cultural media makes it possible to attack the psychological problems of the children touched by war and to more easily reintegrate them in the community. It is advisable to announce that the educational potential of the media on the basic training increased in a spectacular way during the last decades because of the convergence of two causes beyond our control: first, the exponential growth of information and second, knowledge and the increased capacities of new communication technologies.

In this respect, the possible models in the world are

following: arts of interpretation, arts visual, music, cinema, radio and television. From this point of view, the UNICEF supports programs aiming to meet the psychological needs of the displaced children and providing them with lessons in peace (UNICEF, 1998).

In Colombia, the program El Retorno of Alegria (the return of the joy) exposes teenagers to therapeutic play, like in entertaining activities helping them to recover from their psychological traumas. In Rwanda, the children learn co-operation and avoiding conflicts by means of entertaining and cultural activities. In Sri Lanka, in a state of civil war for more than fifteen years, the school syllabus has integrated courses on the settlement of conflict. Many other initiatives of this kind are in place in some form everywhere in the world (UNICEF 1998).

The following examples of usage of the arts of interpretation, visual arts, music, cinema, television and radio show us that the successful use of cultural media for the psychological rehabilitation of the children of war in certain countries touched by war could help us to apply the same methods for other countries no longer at war.

Arts of interpretation. By using arts of interpretation such as theatre, dance, writing, oral storytelling etc we can sometimes decrease the harmful effects and the problematic morals of the children of war (UNICEF 1998). Play is a means for the child to cure his wounds by representing them in the order of the symbolic system (Francoise 2005). Without play, we cannot bandage the wounds. Children have the capacity of a magic imagination for avoiding the mental disorders over a long duration. Play has a force which can reintegrate the children into the society. The Bosnian teachers and the professionals of health in this country have used play for the reintegration of children of war (Federation for Mental Health, 2002).

The Association of Refuge Children of the World thus used play as its principal tool of intervention; the organisers have as a function to accompany the children in a necessary regression for deconstructing what the trauma has caused. The question, which does not fail to arise, is that of the place of play for children affected by war. Isn't it harmful for children traumatised by war to reproduce situations of violence in their plays?

It seems that in fact that if the plays related to war are not to encourage violence, they are useful when they are allowed to exorcise violence and to express their fears. On the other hand, there is a danger when play related to war becomes repetitive and traumatic, and that the border between reality

and the symbolic system is erased. The play of role, as a method of teaching and training, is particularly suitable in emergencies where the children can know feelings of anxiety and distress.

Role play lays the stress not only on the intellectual contents but also on the emotional aspects of everyday life. It makes it possible to explore the feelings of the children whom they can recognise, understand, and can feel a sense of release. Several types of social problems can be explored through role play. Role play as a model of teaching takes its roots at the same time in dimensions personal and social education (Joice & Well, 1996). It tries to help the individuals to find a direction personal within their social worlds and to solve the personal dilemmas with the assistance of the social group. It makes it possible for the individuals to work together to analyse the social conditions and to reach a consensual agreement in order to conform to these situations (Federation for Mental Health, 2002).

On its simplest level, role play is a means of dealing with the problems through action - the problem is identified, put in a scene, and is discussed. Certain pupils can be actors, others observers. As pointed out by Joice and Well (1996), the process of role play offers a sample living of human behaviour which allows the pupils: (a) to explore their feelings, (b) to understand their attitudes, their values and their perceptions; (c) to develop their capacities to solve the problems and (d) to explore the subject of discussion from various angles. A major use of role play is to reveal the conflicts between people so that the pupils can find techniques to solve them (Federation for Mental Health, 2002).

The problems between communities, which are born from the ethnic, racial or cultural stereotypes, or of the authoritative beliefs, can be explored through role play. In this context, role play can uncover the stereotypes and the damages and help the pupils to understand the reasons of the situations of conflict. The narration of history is an experiment of division. It draws up a cordial relationship between the storyteller and the listener, bringing them closer a little more from/to each other: the adult with the child, the child with the child. In the emergencies where the children can be separated from their parents and they have close relations, storytelling can attract them by reducing their alienation and their anxiety and by creating in them a direction of membership.

Moreover, to hear tales during the school life of the children can reinforce their creativity, particularly in the field of writing; (b) to develop their interests for reading; and (c) to reinvigorate the cultural heritage of people.

Storytelling, as a method of teaching, is an average ideal to imply the parents and the other members of the community in the education of their children. They can share tales in connection with their past, their local culture and the social events. Their tales can be a mixture of legends, of mythology, fairy tales or personal stories. When the parents and the other members of the community are concerned, interested and implied in the training, they send a strong message to their children in connection with education. They inspire the child. The tales appreciated by the children of the same age and the same education must comprise aspects, which attract all the groups of listeners. For example, the young children adore the plot and the action while the old children adore subtleties of mood and the interaction between the characters (Federation for Mental Health, 2002). The following examples show us the practical application of these measures, which we propose:

- In the town of Slavonski Brod in Eastern Croatia, the UNICEF contributed to a project which aims to help the schoolboys to recover from the psychological effects of the war by producing dramas and artistic work which defends peace and tolerance. The schoolboys are invited to draw their inspiration in work of Ivana Brlic-Mazuranic, one of the biggest Croatian authors. They proposed the idea to use the tales of Brlic-Mazuranic to render comprehensible for children that the state of war is not a normal state. Rather than to represent the horrors of the war in their school works, it encouraged them to depict scenes inspired by the fairy tales of Brlic-Mazuranic, which stress the triumph of man towards over evil supernatural forces. This idea has been successful in helping children recover from the psychological effects of war.

- To help the children traumatised by war, the Project of counselling of the Sudanese refugees used drawing, theatre, writing and storytelling. This project prepares a program of group work to help the students to become aware of the fact that they are not alone to test certain problems and certain feelings, and that they can find together solutions for their problems and ways of facing there. The result of this project was positive for the Sudanese refugee's children.

- A theatre of the children for peace has been in operation since 1992 in Liberia in order to promote unity and reconciliation.. In Mozambique, a circus of peace resorts to art, dance and theatre to show that it is not necessary to settle the disagreements by force. Ethiopia "War Child," working in collaboration with "Street Symphony" and the "Dandelion Trust," works with street children in Addis-Ababa uses dance and the dramatic arts in order to sensitise the public to their plight. The projects of dance and dramatic arts provide

practical help to these children divert them and teach them self reliance.

- The project "Alive Kids" was set up at Kwa Mashu in 1994 in South Africa to offer to the local population workshops on music, dance and dramatic arts which would enable them to express themselves in a creative way and to reduce kind the traumas of which they were victim. These workshops had positive effects on child victims of armed conflict. The project begins with a program consisting of giving to a group of 25 young people intensive training in music, theatre and dance; the group had 45 participants, from 12 to 25 years in age.

Visual arts. The children of war can express their thoughts and their feelings by photographs and drawings. The objective is to use photography and drawing as well as educational therapy and leisure for these children. Photography allows children to tell the history of their life as they perceive it, to make known the situation in which they live and also to learn more about children from other countries on the basis of their photographs. Thus we can study the following successful examples:

- A photographic project carried out jointly with the charity organisation Visual Impact, makes it possible for children to tell their life in photographs, which they take themselves. The activities proceed in the areas where the organization War Child operates, such as Africa, the area of the Caucasus and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Single use cameras are distributed to the children, who are encouraged to photograph the places and people who import them and thus to tell their lives in photographs. Once developed, the photographs are given to the children so that they choose those which they prefer, and are then exposed locally and are turned over to the children. Workshops on basic photographic technique are offered also.

- War Child sponsors the projects of therapeutic art in the Caucasus for the children of the communities of refugees and the children traumatised by war. These projects encourage the children to express their thoughts and their feelings by drawings and fabric printing. Some of these works are exhibited thereafter (Federation for Mental Health, 2002).

- According to the Norwegian psychologist Magne Raundalen, who works with children touched by war, more than 80% of the children from the Sudanese civil war were deeply traumatized by their experiences. Psychosocial treatment offered in schools with the assistance of UNICEF and Radda Barnen (Assistance of childhood-Sweden) helps many children to overcome the persistent stress, antisocial

nightmares and behaviours. The psychological therapy, offered usually by qualified teachers, encourages the traumatised children to express their feelings by drawing, song, stories, theatre and other means of expression (UNICEF, 1998).

Music. By music we can help child victims of war to recover from the post-effects of the war and to sensitise the public to their plight. It gives to children the possibility of expressing their experiences with the horrors of war. By way of examples we can quote the following successful cases:

- Cradle, an Irish ONG, deals with the readjustment of the children traumatised by war in Mostar, in Yugoslavia calls upon cultural activities such as music and arts to help the children to recover from the post-effects of the war. Cradle set up a violin project for the children of Mostar. The director of the musical development of War Child, the South-African Eugene Skeef, collaborated in the project Alive Kids in Durban in addition to animation workshops in Mostar within the framework of the project of music therapies of War Child. The organisation hopes to establish other international musical collaborations of this kind and to show the creative and therapeutic uses that we can make of the music to gather the young people and to sensitise the public to the conditions in which the children of the "townships" live. In 1996, Alive Kids got a round in the United Kingdom and in Denmark where, by music, it sensitised the audiences to the plight of street children everywhere in the world "Cry Not Child", a new musical reports the experiences of the children of the horrors of the war in Bosnia, in Mozambique, in Angola and Afghanistan. Each year since 1996, "Pavarotti and Friends", in collaboration with Decca/London, the producers for Luciano Pavarotti, and the organisation of international assistance War Child, gives concerts to advertise the activities of War Child and to collect funds (Federation for Mental Health, 2002).

Cinema. Cinema can also exploit a role of sensitising of public and children themselves to the psychic problems of the children touched by the war. Cradle organised the first film "Welcome to Sarajevo" in order to finance its supplementary programs to childhood in Yugoslavia. This film, casts a glance on the city devastated by the war, on the difficulties had by the journalist to keep a promise with a young girl in an orphanage and on the consequences of this promise (Federation for Mental Health, 2002).

Television. Television can sensitise the public and the

children to the physical and psychic problems of children touched by war. Media like television and the radio ensure the continuous flood of messages which is conditioned, for best and worst, the knowledge and the behaviors. These media can also modify the cultural climate and, in a diffuse way, introduce new values into the community.

On the basis of the techniques of communication, refugee teenagers and young Palestinian adults in the buildings of the Association of the Palestinian young people for the leadership and the exercise of rights, learn how to express their frustrations, their fears and their anger. Association uses certain methods, which allows them to escape the atrocities and conflicts around them temporarily.

The Association also aims at increasing the capacity of action of young people through training schemes to teach responsibility, with the techniques of communication and information and with the techniques of listening. They receive a foundation in advising, in order to help other young people marked by violence to face their fears and not to lose hope. They learn how to carry out and produce television programs intended for children. In Colombia, the schools and the clubs for young people use "cases of consolidation of peace," which contains video material in which they show children how to solve conflicts (Machel, 2001).

Radio. It is possible to speak about war on the radio for children.. We can speak about the importance of education during wars by radio programs at school. On 7 April 2000 an interview of Veronique Truchot, Vice-president of EIP International was retransmitted on the waves of Radio-Canada (Winnipeg). During this interview, Mrs. Truchot particularly insisted, in period of wars, on the importance of the education of the young people in the media and the integration of education to the rights of life. Mrs. Truchot spoke about important witnesses and spectators in spite of media violence, the children, who need to listen to messages aimed at reducing the potential of anguish which seizes them and educational activities aimed at mutual respect, stating that life together is possible and preferable by prohibiting any and all forms of violence.

According to the project "radio child" in Canada (Radio Child, 2004), the radio is a tool of communication with the external world. The child deals with the major problems of the world and is able to inform other children of them. This experiment makes it possible for pupils to exert their critical spirit and to understand the subjectivity of information. This training gives them the ability to accept criticisms from other children after the programs, elements essential to self

improvement. The radio at the school aims first to support the children's skills of expression and familiarising the community with the traumas the children have experienced.

The radiophone activity supplies a developmental context, the presence of the pupils, of the teachers and their parents. This step is centred on the creativity of the children: researching, drafting, oral expression, teamwork, self-confidence, reporting, interviewing, debating, presentation, the creation or interpretation of songs and music, radio-theatre, and so on.

- In Tanzania, Radio Kwizera gave to the refugees the opportunity to take part in programs on subjects like health and nutrition, the situation of the children and the culture (Radio Child, 2004).

It should be added that, in some cases the radio technology could also be instruments of destruction and death. For example, at the time of the genocide in Rwanda, the radio was used to diffuse heinous propaganda, intended to stoke ethnic hatred and to encourage people to take part in the slaughter. This is why the organisations, which deal with the media, recently have voiced the need to promote responsible journalism and established hot lines to ensure the respect of the rights of the child and to prevent the exploitation of the children in a conflict (Machel, 1996).

Lastly, it seems to us that the application of all these models will be more effective for the successful rehabilitation of child victims of war. However, our proposal depends on the resources of the countries concerned.

The Personal Account, the creative word

The personal account and the creative word can be used as a means of treatment of the psychic problems of the child victims of war (Nicolas, 1997). According to some, the word occupies a central place in the therapeutic process (Francoise, 2005). The creative word is essential in that it can express their wounds and to provide an outlet to them. To understand their wounds and to be able to live with them requires the healing power of the word. However in many communities, the children are told not to reconsider the past, to conceal their wounds and to behave like normal children. The refusal is particularly significant for the victims of sexual violence confronted with social stigma. Some children deliberately choose to keep silent, their social survival being more important than their psychic survival. The refusal has dramatic consequences over the long term and blocks a healthy development of the personality. If violence as a possible mode of resolution of conflict is accepted by the children, when they

become adults, they are likely to repeat violence undertaken passively.

In this respect, the children express their sufferings; cleanse their memory to build a new direction in their lives, the starting point being the utter pointlessness of war. To create new direction, they must continue with the business of life. In this step, it seems that the children need to be accompanied by a qualified professional; this being an essential step for the success of these creative therapies. A multidisciplinary approach is also essential to allow the articulation of the individual and the collective, of psychic and the cultural. This multidisciplinary approach must go beyond the crossing of medical and social sciences. Meeting with scenario writers, artists, and journalists allows the articulation of the individual and the collective, of psychic and the cultural (Francoise, 2005).

Here, the use of testimony in research in social sciences can help us to obtain the most useful results. According to Helene BEZILLE (whose speciality is sociology), the interview constitutes a powerful tool in the practice of research when this research is aimed at working out and putting to the test an ideal model by taking account of the point of view of those which have knowledge or experience likely to clarify the treated question (BEZILLEDE Helene, n.d).. The personal account has the capacity to transmit direction to a system of powerful didactic support. The researcher, like the pedagogue or the journalist knows that personal testimony can make an obscure idea become clear. Testimony functions then like the argument of authority and are complementary to the demonstration or the concept.

The use of testimony in lawsuits condenses its various functions. It takes part in the establishment of the facts and in the same time invested of a cathartic function. It is finally the foundation of a "work of memory." The testimony of the survivor, while taking part in the establishment of the facts, also is an individual work of mourning and a collective work of recovery, of pooling of the experience reported by the witnesses.

Finally we think the personal account has a therapeutic role for the children of war. As an example, we can quote the case of Burundi where an experiment showed that the personal account could be therapeutic for the child victims of war.. The results of an experiment carried out by Assumpta NANIWE with forty children having lived through acts of violence and who were traumatised to various degrees in Burundi help us to understand this subject well (Naniwe, 1997). This experiment had two objectives: initially, to propose expressive activities with the traumatised child with a

therapeutic aim while trying to respect the way of thinking of the local culture; then, to propose recommendations for an assumption of responsibility of the traumatised child adapted to the Burundian context. However, the essential objective was to lead the children to be able to express themselves more fully. We think that this experience could have applications in other countries touched by war, especially African countries, which have cultures and the traditions similar to Burundians.

Conclusion

To reintegrate the children touched by war and armed conflicts, we must think of a general rehabilitation and then with a special rehabilitation according to needs of the children. In this respect, initially, we must begin psychosocial help to restore the psychological and social development of children and to mitigate the harmful effects of wars. We noted that the contents of psychosocial assistance for the children of war depend primarily with their particular need, their cultures and their traditions. General rehabilitation must thus rest on the capacity of the children to find in them and to overcome difficult conditions after war. Here, we can use certain possible models of creative therapies. For example, the call to cultural media such as arts of interpretation and visual arts as well as the account, the creative word can decrease the psychological problems of the children touched by war.

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