

Overall objective: The psychosocial wellbeing/condition of children and families (IDP and residential) in Chechnya and Ingushetia is improved

Right at the end of the training programme, after 15 months of implementation, it is probably too soon to comment on 'the psychosocial wellbeing/condition of children and families in Chechnya and Ingushetia' for two reasons: first and foremost, the conflict is ongoing with IDPs moving back and forth between Chechnya and Ingushetia, with human rights abuses in Chechnya happening on a daily basis, with fighting, violence, mop-up operations, detentions and death being the constant fear of everyone left in Chechnya and their relatives in the IDP camps and elsewhere. Those who are IDPs in Ingushetia often live under appalling and humiliating conditions in muddy tent camps, many of them enduring the third winter away from home. Secondly, an overall objective is not an objective which can be achieved in the short term or with a single intervention. In that sense, the overall objective is more of a guiding principle or 'the light at the end of the tunnel' of a programme.

What can be said, though, is that the programme under review has shown to have great potential to make a significant difference to the lives of the children and families affected by the second war in Chechnya. All sources of information tapped for this evaluation were in agreement that the project takes the right approach and provides an appreciated tool to support the children and communities in surviving this nightmare. Interviews and monitoring data provide evidence for the impact of the programme. As one teacher said, "for me, this project was a lifeline". It is too soon to see the psychosocial wellbeing of the final beneficiaries improved but where the project can stabilise the situation and prevent it from getting worse, it can be considered to be successful.

The success of the programme so far should however not distract from the need to define the overall objective more precisely and take a suitable effort in monitoring the long term impact.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion it can be said that the programme has successfully managed to get an impressive amount of work done under very difficult logistic circumstances. The programme concept and approach worked very well and the intended programme impact could essentially be achieved.

However, with regard to the future of the programme there is one chance which was missed: if the programme had one permanent team member who would have gone through all the TOT and training cycles, the programme would now be in a stronger strategic position in terms of follow-up support to teachers, development of future activities, supervision and selection of training materials, and so on. Whatever the reasons were for not using this opportunity, it should not be missed in future.

8. Recommendations

It is the opinion of the consultant that the programme was very successful during the first year of implementation. The programme is taking an effective and suitable approach and should be continued in largely the same way for at least another year. Recommendations outlined below are made with regard to a continuation of the training programme:

Rethink and specify the overall objective of the programme: Important questions to be asked are "What exactly do we mean by 'psychosocial wellbeing'?", "How do we recognise that the 'psychosocial wellbeing' has improved?", "What will be different when the 'psychosocial wellbeing' is improved?", "What else needs to happen outside the programme in order to allow for an improvement of the 'psychosocial wellbeing'". These are very difficult

questions to answer but working on these questions will enable the programme to either reformulate the overall objective or to define specific indicators for the objective or both. One example for a more specific overall objective would be 'Children and families are able to endure their difficult/painful situation without suffering further psychological or social damage':

- difficult situation = assumed to be temporary, i.e. living under conditions of war, living in IDP camps, etc.
- further = more than they already suffered due to war and displacement
- psychological or social damage = e.g., aggression and 'destructive boredom', restricted opportunities for intellectual and personal development/growth of children and youth, deprivation of IDPs residing in camps of contacts with the residential population, ethnocentrism and xenophobia, learned helplessness, feeling of inferiority and humiliation, 'strictness' of parents and teachers with children, passivity of men and youth in IDP camps, revengeful thinking, chronic forms of PTSD, domestic violence, social withdrawal, drug abuse, criminality, depression, etc.

After further refinement a formulation like this would lay the foundation for compiling systematic baseline information on the beneficiaries, for developing a number of sound indicators/monitoring tools and, further down the road, for the development of complementary (community based) programmes which may directly involve children, youth or parents.

Start defining sustainable structures which will remain after the programme ends:

What will remain after the programme has come to an end? What will be left behind which is of persistent use to the beneficiaries? What is the exit strategy for the co-operation between CARE and all the schools and health facilities which will unavoidably end at some stage?

These questions need to be addressed in the near future to take a fresh look at the meaning of sustainable development in the context of this particular programme.

Currently, sustainability is limited to an impact on the capacities of partner organisations and participating education and health facilities. Sustainability is further assumed in the form of persistent networking between participants. This latter aspect of the project would be worth of monitoring. There may be further potentials for the project to have sustainable impact which should be explored.

Install a suitable and appropriate monitoring system: In the opinion of the consultant the monitoring tools (i.e. the questionnaires used to collect information from the participants) and procedures currently in use are neither suitable nor appropriate. This impression is confirmed by the programme management and team. A considerable effort is invested in monitoring, certainly with the right intention, but without a shared vision and proportional outcome.

Suitable and appropriate monitoring should be based on clear ideas about which information is needed and why, how much information is needed and from whom, and in which format the information will be collected, entered and analysed. Information which is not needed or analysed (e.g. information about the personal life of the participants) should not be asked and monitoring should be done by applying different methods with restricted samples.

It is recommended to start a complete overhaul of the monitoring system immediately. Due to the nature of the task it is recommended to appoint an expert who spends a few days in the field and, together with the programme team, (a) revises the logical framework, (b) revises existing and develops new indicators, (c) develops monitoring tools, (d) trains the monitors in the use of databases and (e) develops a monitoring schedule and timeline. Such an exercise would significantly reduce the effort and time invested in monitoring while increasing the output and usefulness of the information obtained.

Address security concerns: The security of the entire programme team (particularly of the monitors based in Chechnya) and also participants who travel from Chechnya to Ingushetia to attend training seminars remains to be a concern. This issue touches on fundamental 'do no harm' principles of CARE International and must be clarified. The issue should be

discussed with participants during the training seminars and, if no other solution can be found, participants may be asked to sign a waiver for the event of an incident.

Find new ways of co-operation with partner organisations: The co-operation between CARE and the three partner organisations CPCD, ARD and IPT was largely good and effective. As far as CPCD and ARD are concerned (these two could be met by the consultant), the partner organisations are very strong and busy to implement their own programmes in their respective niches. That is perhaps why the current model of co-operation between CARE, ARD and CPCD does not seem to have a very long term perspective: CARE is quite dependent on the human resources of these organisations when it comes to the implementation of training seminars and in fact both CPCD and ARD emphasised the enormous strain which was put on them due to the co-operation. In consequence, ARD withdraw from an immediate continuation of the co-operation and CPCD announced that it would limit the scope of co-operation for future training seminars. The programme will have to start thinking about new models of co-operation with partner organisations, models which can result in joint, rather than parallel, implementation of programmes.

Select needy schools and sufficient numbers of teachers per school: In future programmes, the selection criteria for teachers should be reviewed. First, the training programme should reach a greater number of teachers per school, even at the expense of the total number of participating schools. The minimum number of participants should be two teachers per school, as was originally planned and referred to in the project description as the 'critical mass' principle⁸. Ideally, four teachers from every school should be invited for the training in order to have greater impact on the entire institution and enable better support among the participating teachers. Second, the worst off schools should come first. Not all IDP children and families in Ingushetia live under terrible conditions. One of the schools visited, the Nazran Gymnasium (School # 1), which is considered to be the best school in Ingushetia, is amazingly well equipped. Although there are some 20% IDP children in the school, these children seemed to be very well off. The selection of this school was originally decided with the idea in mind that the good facilities could be used for the training seminars. However, neither could the seminars be organised in this school, nor can the participation of this school be justified when compared to the miserable condition of schools and students in the tent camp. Third, administrative staff of schools (i.e. school directors or deputy directors) should preferably be invited if they also have a teaching function. E.g. in Karabulak (School # 1) training participants were the school psychologist and one administrator, but none of the teachers. Without any doubt the psychologist was not a bad choice as such, but during the interview the consultant got the impression that he used his participation to further monopolise his privileged position in school.

Facilitate the transfer of know-how among teachers: Measures should be developed to facilitate the transfer of know-how from participants to non-participants. Such measures could include, e.g., to make individual agreements with training participants on the number of colleagues who will be 'thoroughly informed'; to directly support the transfer of know-how by sending trainers for short practical sessions (perhaps together with the children); to adapt the training materials in a way that those contents which require practical training are distinguished from parts which can simply be learned by reading; to hand over a mini-training schedule to the participants for use with their colleagues; etc.

Drop the distinction between trainers and co-trainers: In the opinion of the consultant there is no need to make a distinction between trainers and co-trainers. The very conception of a 'co-trainer' is disempowering and will not stimulate active participation during a training seminar. For the purpose of a training it is enough to distinguish between trainers and

⁸ This 'critical mass' principle quickly leads to organisational problems of schools as it depends on the availability of teachers. The volatility of the situation also does not always allow teachers to keep a commitment over several weeks of a training cycle.

participants, and everyone who is a trainer should have equal responsibility. The function of a trainer for this kind of training is not necessarily restricted to psychologists. As long as one or two psychologists are part of the training team, a pedagogue or a similarly qualified person would also be suitable to train the teachers.

Keep arrangements regarding training for health professionals for the time being: The decision to implement the replication seminars for health professionals only under supervision of the international training consultant was good in the first place and should be maintained for the time being (provided the international training consultant has a medical background). However, an active attempt should be made to identify ways in which national experts can gradually take responsibility for health workers' training seminars.

Provide more (practical) training materials to the teachers: If finances allow, consider distributing additional sets of the training materials (a) to schools which had teachers participate, so that the materials can circulate more quickly among non-participants; (b) to schools which did not participate. There may be materials which are useful for any school, whether it participated in the programme or not. It seems to me that this was the original intention when the distribution of materials to 100 schools was planned. Nearly all interviewed teachers expressed their need for more practical material, i.e. instructions for games, exercises, role plays, etc. which they can use with the children of various age groups and to address different psychological or educational needs in the classroom. There should be an ongoing effort by the project team in Moscow and also in Vienna to identify suitable materials (in English or Russian) to provide to the teachers. The games and exercises provided should not require any fancy equipment or expensive material, ideally they should not require any material at all. If CARE Österreich plans to have a long term engagement in psychosocial programming, a respective library would anyhow be indispensable.

Optimise the timing of training: One recurring feedback of teachers was to organise the training during school holidays and weekends because they had difficulties to find replacement for missed lessons. The consultant is aware of the fact that future training activities cannot be postponed until school holidays start. However, as the opportunity arises, training seminars should be organised during holidays to avoid interruption of schedules.

Prevent teachers from overburdening themselves: In a couple of instances teachers reported that due to the received training they are seen to be counselling capacities and started counselling neighbours and friends. In principal it is to be welcomed if training participants talk about the programme and pass on good advice or relaxation techniques to people around them. However, in the opinion of the consultant it is very problematic if teachers start actual counselling sessions with everyone who knocks at their door. They must be absolutely clear that (a) the training does not qualify them to be counsellors and (b) by providing counselling they jeopardise their own and others' wellbeing. This issue must be addressed and clarified with the entire project team (particularly the monitors) and the training participants to avoid any misunderstanding in this regard. Those teachers who feel the vocation to become counsellors should be informed about respective training offered by other organisations (e.g. MSF Holland).

Organise pilot activities for parents (and/or youth): Parents speaking for themselves as well as teachers and many representatives of other organisations mentioned the need to involve parents in psychosocial programmes. Parents can usually afford time and are definitely interested to learn about topics like stress management, education and parenting. This interest came across so strongly that it must not be ignored, especially with a view to the overall objective. One way of addressing the issue would be to organise pilot events in, and with the help of, some (two or three) schools. Such events could have an educational and a social part. The educational part could be a brief lecture or training on parenting skills or stress management. The event could take two to three hours in total and could be used to

determine the preparedness of parents (and/or youth) to volunteer in self-help activities. If the event is successful, further activities should be planned together with the parents (and/or youth).

One example of where such activities could lead to is a self-help group of mothers: a couple of mothers form a network and support each other during regular gatherings and activities. They send one of them to attend a more intensive (CARE) training on parenting skills. The mother who attends the training takes the role and responsibility of sharing her new know-how with the other mothers. However, this is just an example and what exactly comes out of the pilot events would have to be decided by the parents/mothers. In the same way, the youth in the camps have time and may be interested to volunteer for a good cause. They may be interested to attend some training which enables them to plan and implement activities with the younger children.

Invest in the development of at least one national expert team member: The programme should not miss a second chance to develop at least one 'in-house' trainer by having (a) team member(s) participate in the TOT. Such person(s) would ideally be psychologists and would ideally be selected from among the existing team. However, as there is currently no team member with psychological background, either a team member with related background could be selected or a psychologist hired for the project. If any activities for parents and/or youth take shape and scope the respective team member(s) are likely to be involved with the communities and confronted with lots of questions. Besides participating in the TOT they should also receive an in-depth training in parenting skills in order to be able to give qualified advice to parents.

By having a national trainer available as permanent team member, the development of new training initiatives, support of teachers (supervision, transfer of know-how), constant improvement/development/translation of training materials and implementation of scheduled training seminars in the existing format would become much easier.

Facilitate better name recognition of the programme: The programme should have better name recognition among parents and children. Name recognition starts with a good name. 'Psychosocial Training Programme for Education Professionals' is not a name which is easily remembered and which allows to instantly grasp the nature of the project. Besides the official name the programme should consider to create a name or motto in Chechen or Ingush which conveys the essence of the programme, e.g. 'wellbeing for children and families' or 'we all care for each other', etc. Such a motto could be created either during the training together with teachers and health professionals or in a competition among the children. The latter option would have the advantage that by participating in a competition children already learn and think about the programme and its objectives. If the motto is a success, a logo could be created as well to promote the programme. In consequence, accountability, transparency and the feeling of participating in a movement will be increased for the project users.

Reconsider to organise a platform for professional exchange between organisations: The wrap-up workshop to the evaluation showed that there is the need and interest for regular informal discussions between organisations. According to the international project manager there is little exchange of experiences and opinions pertaining to the psychosocial programming sector which goes beyond communication of performance reports. The programme should consider to take a new initiative to keep the discussion alive and foster communication and productive relationships between psychosocial programme implementers.

Find increased support from the Chechen authorities: From a group of teachers working in Chechnya the feedback was received that the school authorities are not sufficiently informed about the programme and make problems every time the teachers want to leave to attend the seminars. Although the consultant is aware that the Ministry of Education formally approved the programme and is generally supportive of it, more support needs to be ensured

by the programme management in order to have teachers from Chechnya attend without running into trouble with their employer.

Realise teachers' and health professionals' reunions: If finances allow, teachers' and health professionals' reunions and refresher workshops (perhaps during school holidays for teachers) would be very beneficial. This could be a forum for exchange and networking for participants who participated in different training cycles.

Build up a reasonable library: Sufficient funds should be made available by the programme to build up a reasonable reference library for the use of the team and training participants. A list of essential textbooks should be compiled with the help of experts co-operating with the programme and English or Russian copies purchased for the office.

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Annexes:

A 1: TOR

A 2: Schedule of the assignment

A 3: Overview of performance figures

A 4: List of persons contacted

A 5: Logical framework

A 6: Question guides

A 7: Indicators and sources of verification

A 8: Minutes of the wrap-up workshop