Psychosocial Effects of Disasters on Children

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Silent Survivors of Disasters
Stages of Grief

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance

These may not happen in an orderly manner and may keep looping back. May last for months and if not addressed properly may “lock in”

If there is no support these stages do not pass in orderly manner, hostility and anxiety may set in

(Based on the Grief Cycle model first published in On Death & Dying, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, 1969. Interpretation by Alan Chapman 2006-2013.)
Stressors during disasters for children

- Loss of dear ones, loss of property,
- Disruption of normal routines and play etc.
- Fear of recurrence of events, or its perpetuation
- Nothing to look forward to, hopelessness
- Stressed caregivers oblivious to the children’s needs
- Emotional, physical or sexual abuse by duty bearers
- Lack of professional psychological help
Loss of belongings, loss of dear ones
Loss of property, fear of recurrence
Hopelessness, Despair
Neglect, No help
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder after Disasters

Even after more than a month of triggering event, people relive the event as it happened via:

- Intrusive memories
- Flashbacks
- Nightmares
- Avoidance of remembering trauma
- Intense anxiety, disrupting their lives
Post disaster PTSD in children

Children under 6 have some different feelings due to their developmental immaturity. These include

- Loss of interests,
- Detachment from loved ones
- Avoidance of thoughts or feelings related to the trauma

There is more

- Irritability or outbursts of anger
- Extreme temper tantrums
Challenges in providing psychosocial support

- Psychosocial needs of children are low priority as compared to survival and rebuilding structures
- Psychosocial health is not a priority for donors
- Mental health professionals are not available in remote areas
- Professionals are not capable of handling children
- Counselors are not well trained or monitored
Support for children with stress disorders

- Resolute support from immediate caregivers
- Support networks within peer groups
- Harnessing local volunteer support through training by professionals
- Developing activities to bring out latent fears and address these through individual and group therapy
- Book reading, play therapy, art therapy are useful
- Reintroduce routines
- Child Friendly Spaces
Local support groups
Therapeutic Sessions
Activities
Play Therapy - Boys
Play Therapy - Girls
Children’s needs are neglected

- Their physical as well as psychological needs are neglected
- They are considered bystanders or even obstruction in disaster relief
- Adults are too busy or stressed to supervise their activities
- Their routines are broken, no school, no work, no play
- No one listens to them, they are socially isolated
- They are exposed to labor, physical abuse and sexual assault
Neglected by parents
Objectives of CFS

- To offer children opportunities to develop, learn, play, and build/strengthen resiliency after an emergency or crisis, or during a protracted emergency.

- 2. To identify and find ways to respond to particular threats to all children and/or specific groups of children, such as those with particular vulnerabilities, after the emergency/crisis, or during a protracted emergency.
Principles of management of Child Friendly Spaces

- CFS are secure and safe environments for children
- CFS provide a stimulating and supportive environment for children
- CFS are built on exiting structures and capacities within a community
- CFS use a participatory approach for the design and implementation
- CFS provide or support integrated programs and service
- CFS are inclusive and non-discriminatory

A Practical Guide for Developing Child Friendly Spaces UNICEF
Child Friendly Spaces

- Safety and Security of Children is paramount
- Child Protection policies are in place
- Staff interaction with children is planned and documented
- Children with special needs are prioritized
- Child Participation is ensured
- Flexible timing
- Gender and age wise grouping
- Issues of confidentiality and Consent are addressed
Activities in CFS

- Active involvement of children and parents in the activities of CFS
- Leisure and recreational activities to relax the children
- Health and hygiene are promoted
- Education is imparted through non formal, and semi formal means
- Life skills based activities are conducted
- Psychological assessment and rehabilitation through play, book reading and art therapy
Play Therapy
Indoor play
Physical Activities
Rope Skipping – Play
Physical Exercise
Out door sports
Musical Chairs
Debates
Performing arts as catharsis
Group play activities
Art Work
Art Therapy
Art work
Semi formal education
Boys Education
Girl Education
Child Friendly Spaces
Thank you