Suddenly Bereaved Children and Young People: Mental Health Interventions Issues

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Traumatic Events
(Single, Complex/Multiple)

- Various types of loss
- Accidents
- Human-induced
  - Abuse and neglect
  - Domestic violence
  - Community violence
- War conflict
- Terrorism
- Aftermath
- Natural disasters
How trauma impacts on child mental health

Diagram:
- Trauma
- Parental Mental Health
- Social Adversities/Communities Staff
- Parenting
- Child Mental Health
Impact of disrupted environment on child mental health

- Acute and chronic
- Direct impact
- Indirect impact through adults
- Secondary impairments
- Increase of risk / loss of protective factors
- Interaction between factors (chain of adverse events)
Ecological Systems Resilience Framework

- Child
- Family
- School / Community
- Services / Society
Resilience (protective) factors for child mental health

- Attachment to carer(s)
- Family and social stability
- Educational achievement
- Friendships
- Coping strategies
Vulnerability (risk) factors for child mental health

- Violence
- Abuse
- Acute life events
- Chronic adversities
- Family conflict, mental illness
Assessment of children who have suffered trauma

- Engagement!
- Potential discrepancy with adults
- Developmental capacity
- Follow child’s clues, but with purpose and direction
- Remain mindful of (more) trauma
- Disclosure can take time – child must be and feel safe
Therapeutic issues to consider for single traumatic events

- Neither miss nor overstate mental health needs
- ‘Sensitive’ observation / monitoring
- Communication between carers and professionals
- Family values and preferences
- Available supports
- Consider risk factors
- Child may share in their own time – when you least expect them too
- Everyone has a therapeutic role!
Interventions for complex trauma

- Psychoeducation
- Trauma-reprocessing / Psychodynamic
- Cognitive-Behavioural
- Attachment-focused (theraplay)
- Creative
- Family / Systemic
- Behavioural
- Multimodal
World Awareness for Children in Trauma (WACIT)
A psychosocial model for vulnerable children in LMIC: www.wacit.org
WACIT Psychosocial Model

- Access to Mental Health Services
- Psychological / Counselling Interventions
  - Application of Therapeutic Approaches
  - School, community resilience-building
  - Nurturing (Family, Caregivers)
  - Safety, Environment, Attitudes