Developing Child Protection Curriculum in Palestine

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1. Context of UNICEF project and Palestine
2. Risks for children and youth in Palestine
3. Social work in Palestine
4. Dilemmas - how to develop child protection curriculum in Palestine?
   - human rights and CRC
   - gender and patriarchy – what’s gender?
   - culture
5. Family Group Conferences
6. Outcomes to date
Context: Palestinian loss of land since 1947

https://apan.org.au/
Context: Palestine under Occupation

Impacts on Palestinians
• Conflict 3 wars since 2007
• Gaza West Bank division
• Restrictions on trade
• Poverty, unemployment
• UNRWA - Trump
• Fear, despair, trauma
• Patriarchy
• Harmful cultural practices
(Human Rights Watch 2018, Veronese et. al 2017)

Walking to uni in the West Bank
Risks for children in Palestine

- The Palestinian Counseling Center (PCC 2107) recruited young people aged 10 to 16 to research the psycho social impacts for children of living in a conflict situation.

Children identified the traumas of
- detention
- house arrests,
- daily raids,
- restrictions on play and worship in their neighborhoods, schools and mosques,
- Home demolition
Strengths and challenges for Palestinian families

• Muslim family strong social unit
• Extended families live together, grandparents assist in child care (Veronese et al 2017)
• Men - head family, breadwinner, dominant, responsible for children (Blit-Cohen, Jammal-Abboud 2017).

• Women
  • home-makers,
  • mobilise the home for economic, familial and cultural survival,
  • struggle to protect their children against surveillance, home invasions and home destruction (Sousa et.al, 2014).
• Resilient, brave and protective

• Family Honour is tied to women’s identities (UN Women, 2017).

• Male violence to women
  • 30% in the West Bank (17.4%)
  • 51% in the Gaza Strip (34.8%)

• Low levels of education for women
Social workers in Palestine

• Ministry of Social Development, Gaza social workers

• Nascent child protection system – case management

• Social workers mainly seen as almoners for cash transfers

• Psychologists do the psycho social support work

• Are attacked and threatened for ‘family intrusion’

• Often work around the system with community leaders and Mukhtars
Two universities - West Bank and Gaza
Social Work curriculum

- Human rights, ethics and values in social work
- Critical thinking and reflective practice
- Strength based approaches
- Case Management
- Crisis Response
- Advocacy

Child protection curriculum

- Contexts of child abuse, neglect and protection
- Social work with children
- Ethics, laws and the child protection youth justice system
- Risk Assessment for Child Protection
- Theories for assessment in child protection: Child Development, attachment and trauma
- Responding to vulnerable children
  - with disabilities
  - living in danger in conflict zones
  - experiencing sexual abuse
- Family Group and Youth Justice Conferences
Dilemmas in curriculum development

Collaborative pedagogy
- Time and fly in and out
- Older male professors
- Banking model of education

Content
- Human rights, CRC and Best Interests of the child
- Strength-based family inclusive child focused approach
- Trauma and resilience?
- Gender / patriarchy - Teresia and Safa
- Culture - Western vs Middle Eastern Values and traditions

Giving youth opportunities to condemn the war atrocities that they witness can be more effective than clinical programs focused exclusively on alleviating symptoms (Marshall, 2014).
FGC in Palestine

• The Family Group Conference (FGC) is a decision making and intervention model used in child protection and youth justice work in most western countries.

• The key role of the conference is to involve families in the decision-making process and intervention planning on care and protection matters of their children through participation and empowerment.

• The FGC training was delivered through PPT, discussions, role plays and a simulated FGC.
Why Family Group Conferences appealed

- The FGC aligns with Palestinian culture and religion, the use of cultural protocols and prayers in the FGC process appealed to the participants.
- The FGC prioritises the family (the strongest unit in Palestine) in care and protection matters (Hudson et al, 1996).
- The FGC takes a community approach in child welfare which share similar principles with the tribal judges and mukhtars mediation and arbitration used to resolve conflict in Palestine (MoSD, 2017).
- Palestinian child protection workers had started using case management in child welfare 2 years ago. The workers reported that FGC would be easy to implement since it is part of the case management process.
- FGC can be used in both preventative work and as an intervention.
Challenges for the FGC in Palestine

- Professional reluctance to give up power to the family and take a strength-based approach
- FGC is not supported by registration in Palestine
- Palestinian’s patriarchal family structure
- Deemed as not appropriate for honour killing and sexual abuse cases unless there are sympathetic family members
- The need to balance the rights of the child and the interests of the family require skilled facilitation
Outcomes

• FGC worked well, cultural attunement necessary,
• Curriculum now being trialled
• Teaching FGC now
• Alliance between WB and Gaza social work academics

What we learned

• Cultural and religious protocols can strengthened the FGC.
• Community based approach in child welfare is responsive with collectivist cultures
• Practise strength based approach in engaging with the communities
• Learn from each other
Selected references

• APAN 2018 Australian Palestine Advocacy Network https://apan.org.au


