Post-disaster Psychosocial Care for Children:

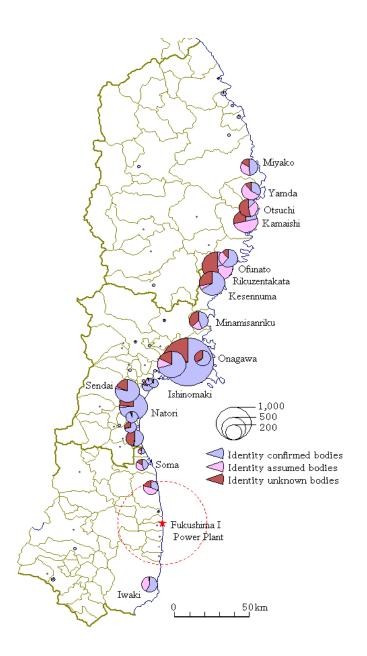
Considerations in psychosocial care programming in the aftermath of the March 11th earthquake and tsunami

June 17, 2011 Ryoko Honda Board member, Japan Association for Play Therapy

Magnitude of March 11th earthquake and tsunami

Deaths	15,373
Missing	7,731
Totally destroyed (buildings)	111,673
Partially destroyed (buildings)	85,541
People evacuated (Iwate prefecture)	19,728
People evacuated (Miyagi prefecture)	25,771
People evacuated (Fukushima prefecture)	97,183
Total number evacuated	142,682

June 16, 2011, Fire and Disaster Management Agency



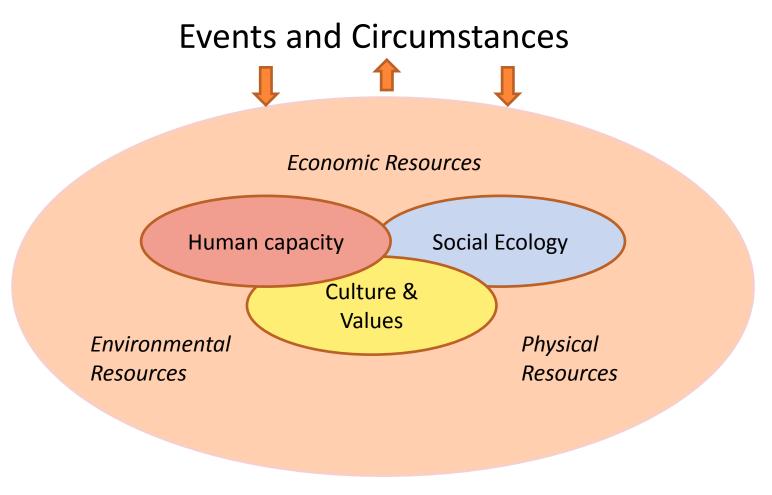
Death by municipality
Sources: Lists of victims, Iwate and Miyagi
Prefectures and Fukushima Prefectural Police
The 2011 East Japan Earthquake Bulletin of
the Tohoku Geographical Association
April, 9、2011
Takehiko TAKANO, Professor,
Tohoku Gakuin University

What is a psychosocial intervention?

- Psychosocial interventions cover a whole range of diverse aspects.
- Mental health: A state of emotional and psychological well-being in which an individual is able to use his or her cognitive and emotional capabilities, function in society, and meet the ordinary demands of everyday life. American Heritage Dictionary
- Psychosocial wellbeing emphasizes the close connection between psychological aspects of our experience (our thoughts, emotions and behaviour), and our wider social experience (our relationships, traditions and culture)

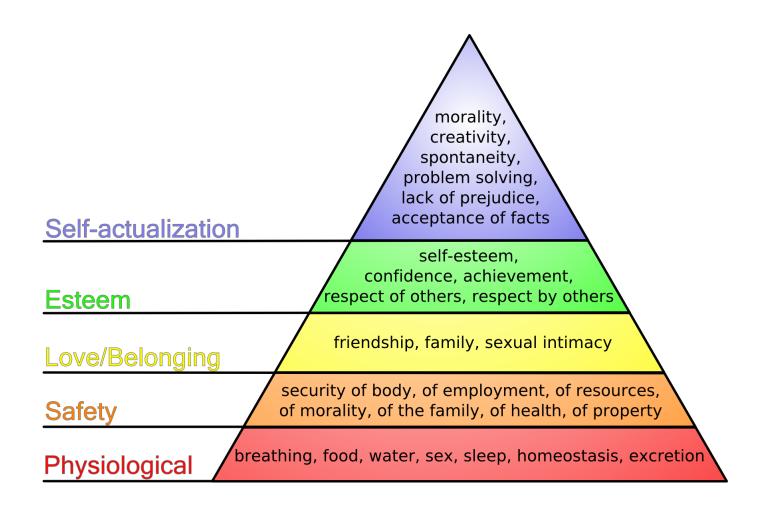
Alison B. Strang & Alastair Ager, Psychosocial interventions: some key issues facing practitioners, *Intervention* 2003, Volume 1, Number 3

Factors Influencing Psychosocial Wellbeing



Alison B. Strang & Alastair Ager, Psychosocial interventions: some key issues facing practitioners, *Intervention* 2003, Volume 1, Number 3

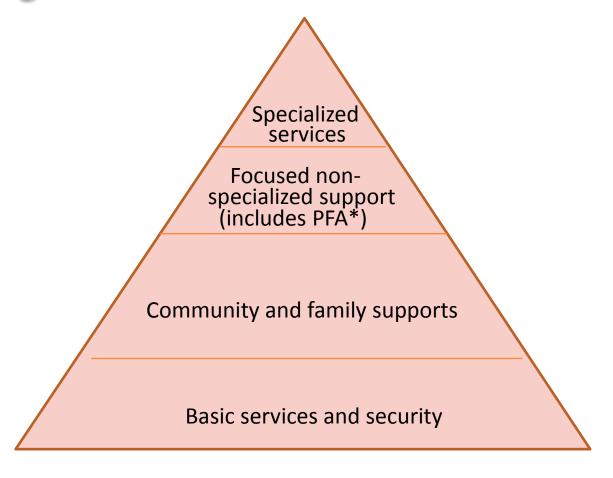
Maslow's hierarchy of needs



IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings

- Developed in 2007
- First inter-agency consensus
- Core principles:
 - > Human rights and equity
 - Participation
 - > Do no harm
 - > Building on available resources and capacities
 - Integrated support systems
 - ➤ Multi-layered supports

Intervention pyramid for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) in emergencies



*PFA: Psychological First Aid (NCTSN, National Center for PTSD)

Phases post-disaster

- Threat/impact phase (acute period)
 <Fight or flee reaction> physiological reactions,
 disbelief, bewilderment, difficulty in focusing, denial,
 fear, anger, sorrow
- Short-term phase
 Overflow of suppressed emotion> Depression, anxiety, accumulated fatigue, deep sorrow and pain, fear, feeling of loss, sense of guilt, alcohol abuse
- Long-term phase
 <Gradually being able to think of daily life and future, occasional sudden recallings> Sorrow, sadness, anxiety

Cohen (2002), Mental health services for victims of disasters, World Psychiatry 2002 October; 1(3)

Factors that increase risk of traumatization of children

- lack of social support during the trauma
- man made vs. natural disaster
- human aggression
- felt threatened or experience great destruction of property
- parental distress
- child's perception of others' physical danger
- lack of parent-child communication about the trauma
- prior emotional difficulties
- significant firsthand exposure to trauma

Akiko Ohnogi, Play based psychological interventions with traumatized children: work with tsunami orphaned Sri Lankan children

Approaches in psychosocial care must:

- Seek to restore the capacity of individuals to cope with the stressful situation
- Be short, flexible, creative and adaptable
- Based on on-going assessment of the different phases of post-disaster, the differences in intensity of impact and severity of loss, the different ages/development stages, cultures and traditions

Why UNICEF/JAPT is targeting children below school-age

- Past interventions focused mainly on schoolaged children and above
- The mistaken assumption that children are resilient to trauma
- Adults' tendency to "protect" a child from having to remember and deal with traumatic experiences
- Influence of parents' and adult's responses
- The affect of trauma on the growth of the brain

Akiko Ohnogi, Play based psychological interventions with traumatized children: work with tsunami orphaned Sri Lankan children

Preschoolers' common reactions to a traumatic event

Emotional reactions:

- withdrawal,
- easily alarmed, less secure, passive and quiet,
- fearful of separation
- strong startle reactions

Behavioral reactions:

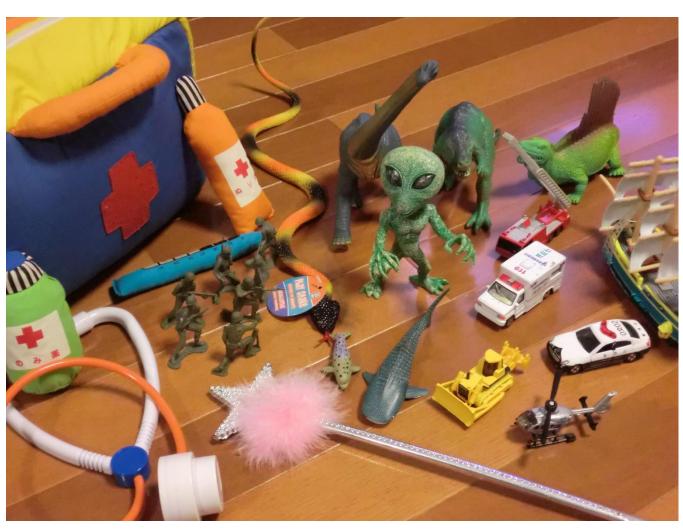
- acting out aggressively
- repetitive traumatic play
- regressing to younger behaviors such as thumb sucking and bedwetting
- sleep problems including nightmares
- somatic complaints: headaches, stomachaches

Akiko Ohnogi, Play based psychological interventions with traumatized children: work with tsunami orphaned Sri Lankan children

Meaning of play

- Play is the most natural means of expression for children
- Play is a universal, intrinsically motivated activity
- Play is a safe way to experience and express any negative or conflicting thoughts and emotions
- Playing through a traumatic event most often leads to mastery of the trauma
- Post-traumatic play can be a retraumatizing experience ⇒ professional help should be called for Akiko Ohnogi, Play based psychological interventions with traumatized children: work with tsunami orphaned Sri Lankan children

Using therapeutic play for urgent care and prevention of traumatization



Therapeutic play

- Not same as "play therapy" but is based on some of its principles
- Do:
- > observe facial and body expressions as well as what the child is doing
- "describe" what the child is doing
- put the child's feelings into words
- Don't:
- ask questions
- > teach
- > correct
- praise

Reconstructing our town





What development workers need to know about psychosocial programming of children

- Do no harm: danger of debriefing and opening up wounds
- Do not pathologize
- Cultural sensitivity
- Support psychosocial well-being of parents and adults to provide a stable environment for children

What development workers need to know about psychosocial programming of children

- Provide psychological education on the natural post-disaster reactions and means of expression of children
- Have proper knowledge and prevention plans for secondary trauma of caregivers and development workers ("burn-out syndrome")
- Plan not only for short-term but for long-term