



University of Utah Trainings

Tham Hin Camp

Training Conducted – June 2013

Summary Report – July 23, 2013

**Trainers: Dr. Rosemarie Hunter, Dr. Norma Harris, Dr. Norma Harris,
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Schedule

Day 1: Assessment of Community Priorities

- Meet with Translators
- Introductions - Ice Breakers: Interviews in Pairs
- Puzzle activity and Assessment of Community Priorities
- Teen Development Part I
- Self Care - Yoga/Exercises for Lower Back Pain

Day 2: Teen Development and Mental Health

- Morning Yoga - Review of Themes from the Previous Day
- Teen Development - Part 2
- Self Care Activity - Musical Chairs
- Introduction to Health and Wellbeing – Understanding Mental Illness
- Anxiety and Depression – Part 1 & Part 2
- Self Care - Yoga/Exercises for Lower Back Pain

Day 3: Mental Health & Substance Abuse

- Morning Yoga – Review of Themes from the Previous Day
- Mental Health Interventions - What can you do to help people with mental illness?
- What is Alcoholism? The Cycle of Addiction and how it Effects the Body
- Alcoholism & Self Help Models – AA, NAMI
- Community Mobilization – Assessment, Goals Setting, Identifying Partners, Developing Action Plans
- Self Care - Yoga/Exercises for Lower Back Pain

Day 4: Community Mobilization

- Morning Yoga - Review of Themes from the Previous Day
- Community Mobilization continued – Finalizing Action Plans and Each Group Provides Final Report.
- Graduation and Certificates
- 12:00-1:00 English Class with advanced English speakers



Caption: Dr. Aung Than Lin practicing yoga with the class. Great eagle pose!

Summary of Trainings

The overall goals of the University of Utah trainings were to provide instruction on issues related to mental health; specifically, teen development, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and how to support families who are dealing with mental health and substance abuse issues.

Content on adolescents included developmental stages, brain development and normal teen behaviors. Group activities included exercises focused on ways that parents and teachers can support their teens to make healthy decisions and avoid risky behavior. Similarly, identifying ways that parents can strengthen their relationship with adolescents.

Mental Health content included how to distinguish between sadness and depression, and fear and anxiety. Materials and interactive exercises focused on skill building activities with assessment, interventions and how to educate and support families who are dealing with mental health and substance abuse issues. Working in small groups, participants also discussed and performed role-play exercises focused on identifying when a referral is necessary, how to make a referral and who to make referrals to. Group work focused on identifying the symptoms of mental illness in the community and generating examples of coping mechanisms to deal with anxiety and depression.

In addition to these areas, the community requested trainings on self-care and prioritized ongoing stress and lower back pain as significant issues. The team provided trainings on how to do self-care by introducing beginner stretches, which targeted the lower back, but was not limited to it. The goal of this was to allow people a way to reduce reoccurring body pain in a safe and effective method. Beginner positions were altered to ensure that the stretches were gentle enough for the participants and still demonstrated that it can help heal muscle pain and increase flexibility if done on a regular basis.

During our training week, there was a request for an English class by the translators and advanced English speakers. Consequently, one English class was offered to advanced English level speakers. Even though many participants wanted to join the class, it was limited to this group not only to avoid multi-level instruction, but to also reiterate the vocabulary that the translators were not familiar with during the training.





Caption: Participant sharing his work with the class. The group was very engaging and supportive of each other.

Training Outcomes

Over the course of the trainings, attendees increased their participation levels by being more verbal, active in exercises and with directing the focus of the trainings. Similarly, the participants showed a mark increase in energy levels and enthusiasm for the topic areas and implementing the actions plans. Participants were also able to accurately identify major themes and learning objectives during the morning review sessions. As an outcome of the community mobilization activities, the participants identified community priorities and developed actions plans for addressing the community-identified issues. Participants developed the following three groups:

Peace Yoga – Co-chairs are Samuel Htoo, Naw Beh Beh, Naw Spate Htoo, and Naw Presa

The goal of this group is to generate an on-going yoga class in the camp.

AA – Self Help Group – Co-Chairs are Sunny B Six and Lay Htoo.

The goal of this group is to create an AA style group in the camp to support individuals who are trying to overcome alcoholism.

Adolescent Activities Group – Co-Chairs are Saw Ku Say, Saw Htoo Htoo, Naw Alice, and Naw Eh Wah.

The goal of this group is to provide activities for youth that bring families together and increase protective factors for youth.

Feedback and Recommendations

Peace Yoga Group

It is important to follow up with each group to provide support and resources for continuing these meetings. This may need some prompting and encouragement, as these group concepts are all new to the participants. The Yoga Group has many enthusiastic supporters and appears to have a good start and plan for offering regular Yoga classes. The Yoga exercises appealed to all ages and the participants were encouraged by the immediate physical benefit of doing these exercises and the increase in their overall outlook (they felt better physically and emotionally).

Teen Group

The Teen group's focus is a mixture of educating teens (planning some community wide education campaigns), and developing more activities for teens. Concerns about early marriage was identified as a community priority and the group expressed that a combination of education and youth activities are needed to address this issue.

Self Help Support Group (adapted AA model)

The AA group may need the most support initially, as the AA model is new to the community and they are unfamiliar with a self-help approach. There may continue to be

some confusion with how to motivate people to be part of a self-help group. The participants engaged in organizing this group intend to begin with family members of alcoholics with the goal of providing more education about alcoholism and support. All participants were enthusiastic to try these group approaches as a way to continue to build on community strengths and address community priorities.

Additional Topics Identified by Participants

There was a strong request for English classes for the camp community, particularly from the participants that served as translators or had more advanced conversational English language skills. The community is eager to learn English and expand their vocabulary.

Throughout the trainings, participants shared that the food rations are going to be reduced next month (July). There was much concern about having “enough” food, as malnutrition was already identified as a concern in Tham Hin Camp.

Early marriage was also identified as a concern among the participants. Community members shared that because camp residents do not see a future for themselves, getting married early and having families is one of the few ways to realize a future. At the same time, participants shared that they think that early marriage is creating more problems with an increase in adolescents having children and not being prepared for the responsibilities that come with having a family. This leads to an increase in birth-related problems, family conflict, depression and substance abuse.

Finally, there appears to be growing anxiety related to the future of the camps, resettlement, and repatriation. Throughout the trainings, participants shared their frustration with not knowing what is going to happen to them. Their feelings of loss of control mixed with fear and anxiety is contributing to and resurfacing past trauma. Whenever possible, the camp community will benefit from having as much information as possible. In this situation, information not only serves to inform the community, but also serves as a coping tool. Even if there is still much that is unknown, the community will need opportunities to process what they are thinking and their frustration.

Acknowledgements

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to visit the Tham Hin community and want to recognize and thank the IRC staff members who supported our work. Dr. Thura for his work in staying in communication to identify training needs and guide the development of the training schedule. Also we appreciate his work in coordinating our accommodations and the logistics of our travel to and around the region. In addition, we send our heartfelt thanks to Dr. Lin, Nosa and the IRC staff in the Chatpawei Office. They were all extremely gracious with their time and support. Dr. Lin was particularly helpful in assisting us onsite with a briefing of current priorities in the community and attending the trainings whenever his schedule allowed. Nosa was our constant companion and guide, providing high quality translation and cultural consultation in order that we could continually adapt our materials in ways that were culturally relevant. Their knowledge, experience and assistance were crucial to the success of these trainings. We greatly value their expertise and are inspired by their commitment to the refugee community.

We look forward to feedback from the team and the community regarding areas that were well received as well as areas for improvement. We hope to continue our partnership and look forward to planning next years visit.

Report submitted by Rosemarie Hunter on July 22, 2013



Caption: The group practices yoga down on the ground. In addition to learning new yoga poses, the group had a chance to laugh and have fun with the new activity.