



University of Utah Bridging Borders Workshops

Ban Mai Nai Soi

Workshops Conducted – June 8 – 12, 2015

Summary Report – September 2015

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Schedule

Day 1: Introductions and Assessment

Combined groups (total 74 participants)

- Introductions & Ice Breaker
- Assessment of Camp Community Priorities with all partners
- Lunch
- Trauma Sensitive Yoga
- Stories of Health, Healing, and Empowerment



Day 2: Training with Group 1: 30 IRC camp staff

- Trauma sensitive yoga
- Ecobiopsychosocial or Whole person assessment
- Empathy and building relationships for healthcare
- Self-care game for expressing anxieties and gratitude

Trainings with Girls Empowerment Team

- Trauma sensitive yoga
- Stories of health, healing and empowerment



Day 3: Trainings with Group 1 Continued: 30 IRC Camp Staff

- Team building game
- HIV & AIDS counseling and testing
- Maternal Health Care & Breast Feeding
- Graduation

Day 4: Trainings with Group 2: 26 IRC Camp Staff

- Trauma sensitive yoga
- Ecobiopsychosocial or Whole person assessment
- Empathy and building relationships for healthcare
- Self-care game

Day 5: Trainings with Group 2 Continued: 26 IRC Camp Staff

- Game to express anxieties and coping skills
- HIV & AIDS counseling and testing
- Maternal and neonatal health
- General Q & A to learn more about each other
- Graduation



Summary of Workshops

This year, we provided trainings to two separate groups of participants. In addition, we integrated self-care activities such as trauma sensitive yoga, and games to allow sharing of anxieties and coping strategies. Overall, the workshops were well received by all group. Participants were actively engaged; they took notes and enthusiastically participated in all activities. They expressed an appreciation for the variety of learning methods used, including games, role plays, and small group discussions. People identified and demonstrated new information learned during and after each presentation.

The participants varied widely in their work experience and knowledge of the material. For some, the information presented seemed too basic, and for others too advanced. Perhaps in the future, we could do more in assess the knowledge and skills of participants and find ways to better tailor the workshops to diverse groups. In addition, if we focus on only one or two topics, we can go beyond the basics and have time to practice the skills learned.

With the second group of participants, we took some time to do a general “Q&A” to learn more about each other. The Utah facilitators and camp participants asked each other questions on topics of cultural practices, health, spiritual practices, life in general. This was very meaningful.

Three participants expressed interest in becoming yoga teachers. Yvette Melby spent time with them in a small group setting to provide support and training.

Additional Topics & Suggestions Identified by Participants

At the end of the trainings, we spent some time identifying additional ideas for future workshops. The participants provided the following suggestions.

Topics: management, leadership with the larger community, patient counseling, hepatitis—counseling and treatment, communicable diseases, maternal health training specific to nurses

Trainers also provided feedback and identified the following additional topics.

Topics: models of integrative health care—building relationships between healthcare providers and traditional healers; community relationship building (Participants said that many in the community do not trust them, so do not attend the clinic. People rather go to traditional healers.) A general Q & A session to get to know each other or time for informal interactions

Representatives from the host agencies (International Rescue Committee – IRC and Jesuit Refugee Services – JRS) were also asked to identify training needs for health care workers and educators. The representatives all indicated that turnover of personnel in the camp is very high and that reinforcing the same topics that had been presented would be fine, despite concerns that training might be repetitive or not as effective because of short time limits. Other suggestions included:

New staff replacements are often less trained and sometimes very young. It is hard for them to garner respect. Giving them tools to improve their skills is very helpful. Empathy is especially important to teach to new staff.

Lots of role plays and simulation exercises to practice skills.

Focus on train the trainer model--build the capacity of participants to teach the community what they have learned.

Cross training between groups; psycho social workers are really short staffed;

Looking at opportunities for applied skills. Perhaps spending more time in the classroom. Do one-on-one training with individuals. Possibly provide a pediatric OT to be able to learn how to help an individual child. Perhaps get specific cases to us ahead a time and see what kind of a team or help from a team member could be added.

Provide Written Material

One of the most consistent requests was to have written materials available during the trainings and that could be left with participants. This was noted by the trainers, the

camp participants, and camp NGO staff. Additionally the translators wished for the material ahead of time to aid in translating.

It was commonly agreed that the materials needed to contain simple ideas but also the main points of the trainings so it would serve as an outline of things to remember. More of a resource or reference sheet. One idea was to have the handouts in English on one side and Burmese on the other. Additionally, written materials would also support the “train the trainer” model so participants would have materials to use to pass on the knowledge to others.

Increase Interaction with Participants in their Environment (Schools, Clinics)

Several suggestions from both participants and facilitators focused on the desire to see the participants in action and hear their challenges in their place of work. This might involve asking participants to provide actual case studies to discuss and apply principles to a case. Additionally, participants suggested that workshop facilitators see them in the classroom and provide consultations afterwards. Below are a few examples.

More classroom observations or home visits where appropriate. Maybe a half day training...and half day doing applied work in the classroom setting or in the clinic. Or perhaps alternate training and applied work.

Idea for next year doing some accompanying of people doing the training to support them and doing some case planning to help with specific situations.

A couple of topics explored and applied deeply and with hands activities where they work.



Camp Climate: Observations and Reflection

The word “unsettled” is one way to describe what is happening as a result of several significant realities being experienced by camp residents at this time. Talk of repatriation is growing and resettlement is occurring at a slower pace than in the past. Some suggest this reality has increased feelings of being hemmed in with few opportunities and fear of the unknown future. Turnover in camp staff employed by the NGO’s is high due to resettlement or simply returning to Burma (Myanmar). Informally, camp residents and staff say they see more alcohol and other drug abuse, as sometimes happens when individuals experience extended periods of stress, uncertainty and the lack of ability to control their future. Some camp leaders worry that many people have no experience of a world outside the camp, especially youth. They wonder if in their naïveté they could be taken advantage of and exploited.

Participants spoke of significant cultural shifts in the community, as some parents feel that the stress of camp living is taking a toll over time and some are less able to care for their children. As one participant noted about changes in some parents’ behaviors:

A problem in the community; the community is not talking good to the kids; talking bad things to the kids the adults are teaching the kids bad words so kids don’t have respect for the adults and the adults don’t have respect for the kids and treat them as second class citizens.

Many of those living in the camp are also resilient survivors of many forms of persecution. This shows through an expanding interest and drive towards employment certificates and personal development. There is also increasing freedom of movement, more opportunities for jobs outside the camp, leading to more money for some.

As the outside world continues to enter the camp through media sources, the desire for connecting with outside grows as well. Already resettled family members send back remittance money, and stories of life in more developed countries. Many expressed appreciation that someone from “outside” cares and wants to help. They liked asking us questions and learning about our world.

Reflections by Utah team members

After this trip, I feel I am much more informed about the history of Burma, and I can better understand the refugees that are here in Utah.

I felt inspired by everyone’s efforts to make this a reciprocal learning experience. Our team and the JRS/IRC teams seemed all to be dedicated and interested in making the most out of the week together. It was great to participate in such an effort. I felt like it was a very rich experience because we were giving and receiving in abundance.

Acknowledgements

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to visit Ban Mai Nai Soi and want to thank the JRS and IRC staff members who supported our work with their time in staying in communication to identify workshop topics and guide the development of the training schedule. In addition, we send our heartfelt thanks to all the staff that supported us inside the camp; they were our constant companions and guides, providing high quality

translation and cultural consultation in order that we could continually adapt our materials in ways that were culturally relevant. JRS and IRC staff members were extremely gracious with their time and support. Their knowledge, experience, and assistance were crucial to the success of these workshops. We greatly value their expertise and are inspired by their passion and commitment to the refugee community. We look forward to feedback from the staff and the participants regarding areas that were well received, as well as, suggestions for improvement.

