

Psychotherapeutic Support for Women and their Families

Health - SGBV

Women who are particularly affected by the traumatic experiences they have been through and their families are referred to the ITEI, where they have access to psychotherapeutic support.



UNHCR/A. Simancas

Background

Bolivia hosts over 700 refugees, out of which around 40% are women and girls. Women and girls are often at risk of sexual and gender-based violence, persecution, social exclusion, detention, extreme poverty, and other potentially life-threatening situations and violations. Many of the protection risks faced by women and girls are heightened in situations of flight and displacement. The presence of an adult male family member or guardian does not always guarantee their safety, although unaccompanied women and girls may face increased risks. This situation can result in severe psychological trauma, which, in turn, can hinder the ability of women and girls to perform everyday activities and properly integrate within their host communities. In order to address this issue, UNHCR and its partner, PMH, work jointly with the ITEI to provide psychological support to women.

Location Santa Cruz and Cochabamba - Bolivia

Time & Duration January 2010 - present

Population Groups Refugees

Actors UNHCR, Pastoral de Movilidad Humana (PMH), Instituto de Terapia e Investigación (ITEI)



Description

The project aims to provide psychotherapeutic support to women traumatized by experiences in either their country of origin or Bolivia as a host country. This service is extended to their families. The project emphasizes the importance of self-help and community support through activities such as group therapy, where participants are encouraged to come up with solutions to their situation.

Steps to Implementation

- Identified cases of women in need of psychotherapeutic support are referred to ITEI.
- Once at ITEI women are provided one-to-one psychotherapeutic support.
- The therapist then identifies potential cases of SGBV/domestic violence.
- If considered necessary, women are asked to bring their families so that the psychotherapeutic support service can be extended to them.
- Beneficiaries are asked to attend group therapies,

Impact and Results

- On average, 55 people participate in group therapies.
- During these therapies, participants have often come up with concrete solutions to problems they have discussed. (mostly in the area of employment)
- Participants of group therapies have built stronger relationships and have learned the importance of mutual support. They now help each other with the day-care of children and other activities such as the organization of kids' birthdays.
- Cases of domestic violence have been identified through one-to-one psychotherapy with women.

Constraints

- There is occasional reluctance of participants' family members to attend psycho-social therapies.

Lessons Learned/Keys to Success

- Periodic group therapies are a catalyst for building communal support networks, as participants often strongly empathize given that they share similar experiences.
- As participants to group therapies share similar experiences, they may be most apt to come up with solutions fitting their situations.

