Proportion of attendees representing various organizations (n=40)

Introduction

In view of the political turmoil in Kashmir in 2016 which lasted for more than five months, WHO, with local NGOs, working in Kashmir, and chaired by Mrs. Nighat Shall Pandit, invited Dr. Sayed Aqil Hussain, Consultant Psychiatrist at UK through Dr. Mohammad Muzaffar Khan, Consultant Clinical Psychologist at Kashmir, to conduct a one-day Psychological First Aid training in collaboration with the Department of Health Services, Kashmir, using the WHO devised PFA module. The workshop was conducted as part of GIPU signed between ICRC and the Department of Health and Medical Education, Kashmir. The PFA training was incorporated into the ICRC's MOU by Dr. Sayed Aqil Hussain on the recommendation of Dr. Shehlaa Seena, Director WHO, Mental and Substance Misuse and Head of mental health programme. Dr. Seena was also responsible for supervising the formulation of PFA by WHO and also for implementing the 2013-2020, WHO global mental health action plan around the world.

The PFA training was the 5th training programme conducted in collaboration with the Royal College of Psychiatrists London and Health and Medical Education Department of Jammu and Kashmir, with support from WHO Geneva.

Aims and Objectives

To train all the relevant organizations, local, national and international, both of Government and Private Sector working on ground to help the people of Kashmir to deal with the crisis situation, prevalent at that time in Kashmir, using WHO devised, validated and tested PFA module.

Trainers & Trainees

The training was delivered by Dr. Sayed Aqil Hussain, FRCPych, Consultant Psychiatrist and master trainer for mh-GAP module devised by WHO and Mohammad Muzaffar Khan, Consultant Clinical Psychologist and mh-GAP trainer in Kashmir at HELP Foundation head quarters Kashmir.

The trainers included members from various private organizations including HELP Foundation, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Medicins sans Frontières (MSF), Borderless World Foundation, Kashmir Education Initiative, local NGOs including AIECM, IPMRs (a local physiotherapy centre), Methcure Clinic and Islam's Relief. It also included participants from Drug De-addiction Centre Police control Room Srinagar, Department of Psychology, Women's College Srinagar, Kashmir Tihange College Hospital and Research, Behavioural Sciences University, Islamic University of Science and Technology, Assam, Kashmir University, Social Welfare Department, Directorate of Health Services, Kashmir, and journalists and representations from various news and broadcasting agencies including, Greater Kashmir, Radio Kashmir Srinagar and San Khan.

PFA preserving dignity in crisis response

Crisis events involving exposure to trauma and sudden loss occur in all communities of the world. Orientation in PFA gives responders a framework for how to respond in a natural, supportive, practical manner.

A common mistake in current humanitarian responses in many countries is to only make psychological first aid available in the absence of other care.

Psychological first aid is feasible and appropriate during crises and should be complemented with other essential mental health and psychosocial activities.

Implementing PFA model in Kashmir context

The principles of LOOK, LISTEN and LINK were discussed in the cultural context.

The various signs and symptoms as per the LOOK principle were discussed which included disoriented children, children trying to initiate distressing behaviour, abnormal body sensations, anxiety and worry, uncontrolled hyperactivity, fatigue and helplessness, number of senses, panic attacks, shouting and crying, aggression.

The participants also discussed the impact of the situation prevalent in Kashmir, which included people feeling dejected with regards to their cause, restricted their movement, less social exchange, unable to offer daily congregational prayers, lack of psychosocial support, exams not conducted, not much support around instead by volunteers which was inadequate.

Participants also discussed the principle of LISTEN and highlighted the need to listen more and talk less which was one of the important approaches to help people.

The principle of LINK was followed by discussing proper way of listening and why that was very important principle in the implementation of PFA model.

Role play was used to demonstrate Drs' and DON's good communication.

The PFA model was devised, which included the principles of LOOK, LISTEN and LINK. Participants also discussed the principle of LINK where the participants who were diverse background shared the availability of all possible resources from organizations who could help as required in the implementation of PFA model.

What is PFA?

- Humanitarian, supportive and practical approach for fellow human beings who recently suffered, are suffering or are likely to suffer.
- Non-intrusive, participant/care and support focused.
- Helping people to address basic needs (food, water, shelter), provide immediate care,
- Helping people and helping them to feel calm.
- Provide essential information, services and social support.
- Protecting people from further harm.

Evaluation of PFA training

The participants felt that they learnt how to reach out to people in distress in prevalent political turmoil. The role played, Don's and DON's communication were found to be very useful by the participants.

The punit of interaction helped the participants to understand their role in the overall scheme of helping people in need.

Participants felt that it was a completely new and enriching experience for them.

The principles of PFA-LOOK, LISTEN and LINK were found useful.

Trainer created a supportive atmosphere and teaching methods were effective.

Other highlights from workshop

The workshop started with discussions on the political turmoil in Kashmir and the impact of the situation in the community.

Various physical, social and psychological reactions experienced by the target audience were discussed. Participants shared the importance of providing the basic necessities and supporting the people. Financial help on the basis of PFA pandemic was discussed.

The participants expressed their views on what PFA meant.

The participants felt the issue of suspicion was the major stumbling block in providing help.

What is PFA NOT?

- It is NOT something only professionals can do.
- It is NOT something you learn in a week.
- It is NOT "psychological debriefing." No detailed discussion of the distressing event.
- It is NOT involving people to analyze what happened or put time and events in order.

Although, being available to listen to people’s stories, it is NOT pressuring people to tell you their feelings or reactions to an event.

Various positive and negative coping strategies

Various positive coping strategies that were shared by participants included:

- Increased in religious activities and cultural rituals.
- Visiting shrines.
- Attributing it as something that has come from Almight.
- Applying turners to foresee to relieve distress.
- Reassuring each other.
- Hugging and holding hands.

Various negative coping strategies that were shared by participants included:

- Over protectionism.
- Shouting and crying.
- Anger and aggression.

Recommendation for future PFA workshops

The participants recommended that more time should be available for the workshop.

Participants recommended more role plays.

The workshop should be done in every school and college.

More professionals like lawyers and journalists should be involved.

These workshops should be supported by both primary and secondary care services.