

MHPSS LEARNING COLLABORATIVE

Meeting Report #16
June 30, 2022

Findings from the Baby Friendly Spaces
Program in Bangladesh and the Entre
Nosotras Program in Panamá and Ecuador

This report was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by University Research Co., LLC (URC) and City University of New York School of Public Health (CUNY SPH) and was authored by Weanne Estrada, Victoria Ngo, Emily Peca, Samantha Ski, Monica Dutcher, Andrew Lwasa, and Kristen Kirksey. This report is made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of URC and CUNY SPH and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

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MHPSS LEARNING COLLABORATIVE

The Implementation Science Collaborative (ISC) supported through the HEARD project leverages a global partnership to generate, synthesize, and use evidence to improve policy and program implementation in low and middle-income countries. ISC partners are undertaking four studies to better understand the effectiveness and implementation of community-level MHPSS interventions, with an emphasis on the PSS intervention components and impacts. A fifth, related study is being funded by GIZ and implemented by War Child Holland in Jordan. The MHPSS Cross-Study Learning Collaborative supports these studies by providing an avenue for knowledge and information sharing across the different study teams.

PARTNER PARTICIPANTS

ACTION CONTRE LA FAIM (ACF)/ JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY (JHU)/ UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA (UVA)

- Le Roch, Karine
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- Ski, Samantha
- Dutcher, Monica
- Kirksey, Kristen

WAR CHILD HOLLAND (WCH)

- Brown, Felicity

AGENDA

Findings from Bangladesh, Panamá, and Ecuador

The goal of this meeting was to provide the ACF/JHU/UVA (Bangladesh) and HIAS/CU/UCPH (Panamá and Ecuador) teams the opportunity to present key findings from their evaluations and consult with the Learning Collaborative members on project-specific issues, challenges, and next steps.

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 9:00 - 9:10 | Welcome and Meeting Overview
Icebreaker
Emily Peca, DrPH, URC |
| 9:10-9:30 | Presentation of Findings: Scientific Evaluation of Psychosocial Impacts of Baby Friendly Spaces in Low-Resource Humanitarian Settings (Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh)
Karine Le Roch, PhD, ACF
Amanda Nguyen, PhD, UVA |
| 9:30-9:50 | Presentation of Findings: Entre Nosotras: Designing and evaluating a community-based psychosocial intervention for women in Ecuador and Panamá
Annie Bonz, LCAT, ATR-BC, HIAS
Claire Greene, PhD, CU
Alejandro Angulo, HIAS
Andrea Armijos, MSc, HIAS |
| 9:50-10:20 | Discussion
Victoria Ngo, PhD, CUNY
Rosemary Mwaisaka, MSc, ECSA-HC |
| 10:20-10:30 | Next Steps and Closing
Weanne Estrada, MPH, CUNY |



MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

In 2021, Action contre la Faim (ACF) and HIAS separately implemented mental health and psychosocial support interventions for trauma-exposed populations in Bangladesh and Panamá/Ecuador, respectively. Both teams have completed the implementation and data collection phases of their study and are moving forward with data analysis and dissemination. This section summarizes the findings of each team as presented during the MHPSS Learning Collaborative Meeting on June 30, 2022.

BABY FRIENDLY SPACES (BANGLADESH)

Action contre la Faim/Johns Hopkins University/University of Virginia

Recognizing the critical role of maternal mental health in addressing the health and development of children in emergencies, ACF developed the Baby Friendly Spaces (BFS) program. BFS is a holistic psychosocial support program implemented as a part of child malnutrition prevention services that aim to enhance mothers' wellbeing, internal resources, and child care practices skills and create a buffer against the deleterious health and developmental impacts of humanitarian crises on mothers and children. This study used a cluster randomized controlled trial to evaluate the effectiveness of BFS for improving conflict-affected Rohingya mothers' psychosocial well-being, and secondarily, for supporting the growth of their young children experiencing acute malnutrition while living in refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

Main Findings

- Preliminary results indicate that with supervision and implementation support, integrating manualized psychosocial support activities with nutrition services holds potential for reducing **distress** and improving **subjective wellbeing** of conflict affected mothers of malnourished children. However, results were weaker for improving **functioning** and **positive coping**.
- All **dissemination and implementation outcomes** as reported by providers had similar results for both the standard and enhanced intervention. Scores were generally high across **adoption, acceptability, appropriateness, climate** and **leadership**. They were slightly lower, albeit still high, for **feasibility** and **reach**.

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

ENTRE NOSOTRAS (ECUADOR & PANAMA)

HIAS/Columbia University/University of Copenhagen

The foundation for the Entre Nosotras (Among/Between Us) is the HIAS community-based MHPSS curriculum. The program is designed to mobilize social support, build coping skills, strengthen community connectedness, and stimulate collective action to promote the safety and wellbeing of women in diverse communities across Ecuador and Panamá. This cluster randomized feasibility trial evaluated the impact of Entre Nosotras on the wellbeing of forced migrant women in Ecuador and Panamá.

Main Findings

- There were small to moderate improvements in **subjective wellbeing, community connectedness, safety, social support, and problem-focused coping** among Entre Nosotras participants.
- The dimensions of wellbeing most strongly related to overall satisfaction and quality of life were **higher standard of living and level of safety**.
- There were greater reductions in **avoidant coping styles** among participants who received the enhanced intervention relative to the standard intervention.
- The greatest levels of improvement were seen in **informal and formal workers (vs. unemployed), people with higher distress, functional impairment, and lower wellbeing and coping at baseline, and people who attended more sessions**.

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Following ACF's and HIAS' presentations, the members of the MHPSS Learning Collaborative engaged in a plenary discussion around the presenting teams' main challenges and questions. The following discussion points describe the challenges identified by the presenting teams and the recommendations and reflections that arose from the Learning Collaborative in response.

DISCUSSION POINTS

The challenge: The complexity of pragmatic field research

Because of the many different variations in the study population and intervention components, both the Bangladesh and Ecuador/Panamá study teams had to cluster their data in multiple ways during analysis. This has implications on the causal inferences that can be made about the data, as the role of context could be said to outweigh actual intervention details/approaches in explaining the outcome effects in some ways. Furthermore, because of the complexity of pragmatic research, it can be challenging to present a complete but clean and concise version of the results, especially for publication in journals with strict space limitations.

Responses and reflections from the Learning Collaborative

- In order to narrow down the complexity of the findings and provide a clear, focused message, the following questions need to be asked:
 - What data do we value?
 - What are the most important messages for system leaders and policy makers?
- Some journals are allowing additional tables and extended descriptions to be included as annexes to the manuscript. This can provide the necessary space to discuss clustering/contextual details.
- Creating a manual for the intervention and reporting the findings are important for presenting a full picture of the intervention. Future implementers who wish to use the intervention can take a look at the complete picture, and then based on their specific purpose and contextual situations, can just select, pilot, adapt, and implement which aspects of the intervention are most appropriate or meaningful to them.
- These challenges highlight the importance of the Learning Collaborative's work. Our work brings together evidence from multiple smaller studies and explores the ways to unpack that variability and complexity.

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

DISCUSSION POINTS

The challenge: Measuring the added value of community-based design

HIAS underwent an extensive community-based design process to tailor their intervention to the needs of their study population. While the process promoted engagement and developed community ownership of the intervention, it was a time- and resource-intensive approach that may not be feasible for everyone. Because of the effort that went into this process, HIAS asked the Learning Collaborative if they were aware of any methods to empirically measure or operationalize the true value of community participation in the design process.

Responses and reflections from the Learning Collaborative

- Other research consortiums and MHPSS groups have also been grappling with the challenge of measuring the value of the community design process. This seems to be a novel but common thread in implementation science circles.
- Ripple effects mapping is a qualitative approach that can be used to identify events and impacts that occurred as a result of the community-based design process.
- Other projects and studies such as the Harlem Strong intervention in New York City are comparing the effects of a standard, as-is intervention versus an intervention adapted through a community-engaged approach. This process would allow a direct comparison of the effects of the two approaches.

Opportunities for the Learning Collaborative

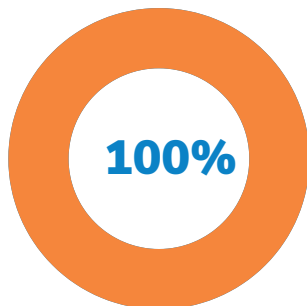
According to the Learning Collaborative members, the process of selecting and using a harmonized set of measures for wellbeing, coping, functioning, and distress uncovered challenges and gaps in measuring mental health outcomes in trauma-exposed populations. For example, analyzing the Brief COPE required extensive clustering. There also aren't many robust measures for evaluating subjective wellbeing. There may be an opportunity for the Learning Collaborative to fill in this gap by creating and adapting better cross-cultural measures for trauma-impacted communities in its next round of work.

POST-MEETING EVALUATION

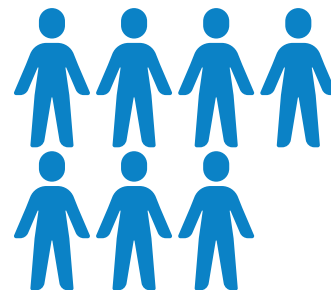
An anonymous post-meeting survey was issued to all individuals who attended the Learning Collaborative Meeting. The attendees were asked to rate the quality and utility of the meeting as well as provide written feedback and suggestions for improvement.

RESULTS

- Of the 15 attendees from the study teams, seven participated in this evaluation (46.7%).
- Except for TPO/WUSTL, all study teams were represented in the survey.



All (100%) of the respondents rated the meeting topic as **moderately to extremely useful**.

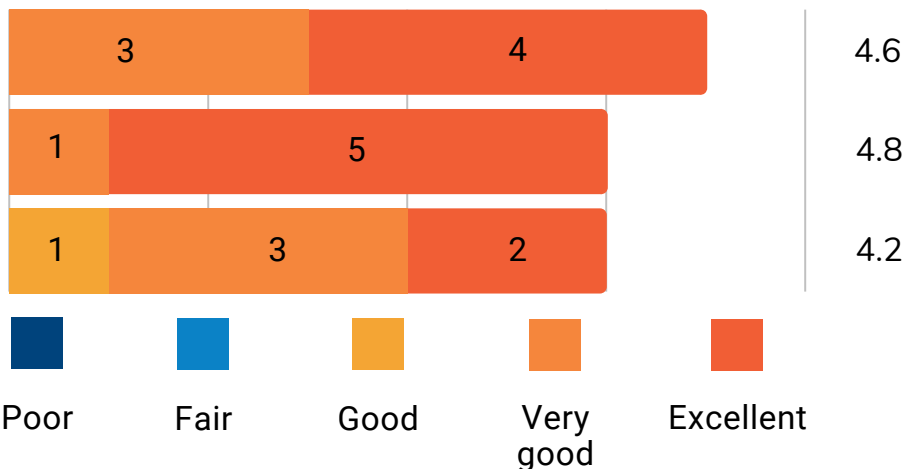


All (100%) of the respondents stated that the meeting delivered the information they expected to receive.

RELEVANCE OF TOPIC

NOVELTY OF INFORMATION

MEETING DURATION



“

I liked learning about the study designs, specifically about the adaptations that were made to both study designs in order to best serve the communities.

“

It was great to see the results of the teams' research and how they chose to frame them - very relevant for us.

“

It was interesting to learn about the field-level challenges and solutions from the various projects.

Next Learning Collaborative (LC) Meetings

LC #17 FINDINGS FROM JORDAN

July 2022

This Learning Collaborative Meeting will focus on key findings and evaluation results from the pilot study of War Child Holland in Jordan.

LC #18 LESSONS LEARNED & NEXT STEPS

September 2022

The Learning Collaborative will convene to reflect on the lessons learned from the LC process and discuss future opportunities and partnerships.



Zoom ID: 599 794 7941

ABBREVIATIONS

ACF	Action contre la Faim
CUNY	City University of New York
ECSA-HC	East, Central, and Southern Africa Health Community
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HAI	Heartland Alliance International
HEARD	Health Evaluation and Applied Research Development
ISC	Implementation Science Collaborative
JHU	Johns Hopkins University
LC	Learning Collaborative
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
TPO	Transcultural Psychosocial Organization
CU	Columbia University
UCPH	University of Copenhagen
URC	University Research, Co.
UVA	University of Virginia
WCH	War Child Holland
WUSTL	Washington University in St. Louis

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