



Developing (Evolving) a Manual for Psychosocial Intervention in Liberia

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medica mondiale – who we are

- ▶ Feminist organisation since 1993
- ▶ Balkans, Afghanistan, DR Congo and Liberia
- ▶ Underpinned by feminist values and principles – focus on sustainability and working alongside national women and organisations



Violence against women in Liberia during the war 1989 – 2003


Systematic sexualized violence during the civil war: 70 – 85% of Liberian women were raped, many gang-raped

Torture, kidnapping, slavery, child soldiers



Many widows in Liberia, highest number in the Southeast

Women in post-war Liberia I

- ▶ Normalization of violence against women
 - ▶ Rape one of the most reported crimes in the country
 - ▶ High level of domestic violence
 - ▶ Poverty leading to sexual exploitation of women and girls by “Sugar Daddies”, aid workers, peace keepers, etc.
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Women in post-war Liberia II

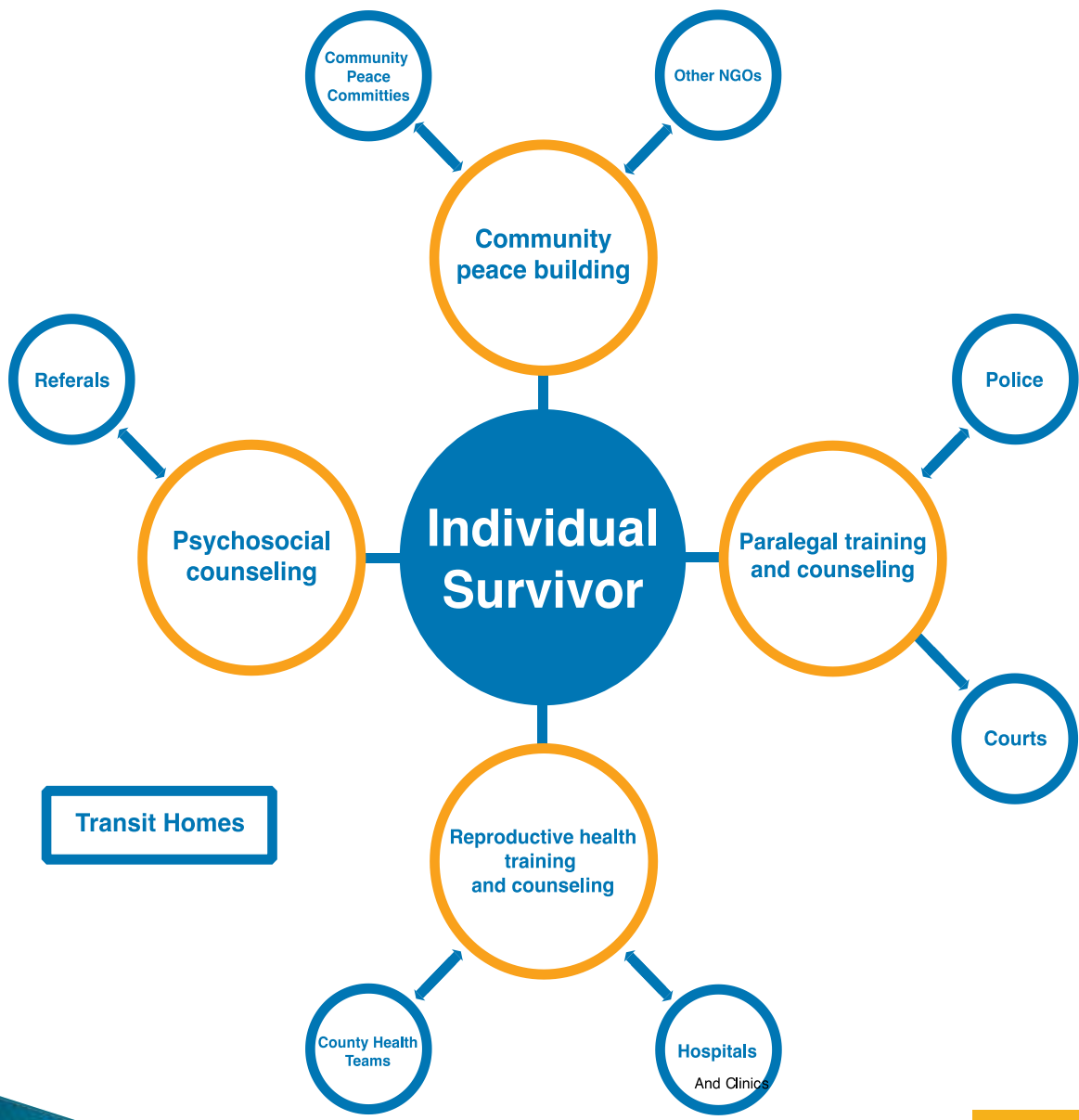
- ▶ Child marriages
- ▶ Forced marriages
- ▶ Teenage pregnancies

and other forms of violence against women



medica mondiale in Liberia

- ▶ mmL since 2006 as one of three partners working on a reintegration and recovery project, funded by the German Government.
- ▶ Collaborative approach in south east – Infrastructure and Agriculture, Education and Governance and Empowerment of Women through addressing war trauma and sexual and gender based violence



Community Level

- Community volunteers
- Income Generation Groups
- Women support groups embedded in peace communities

County Level

SGBV - Coordination

- Referrals
- Rapid Resonse
- Taskforces/Protection Core Groups

Watchdog Function

National Level

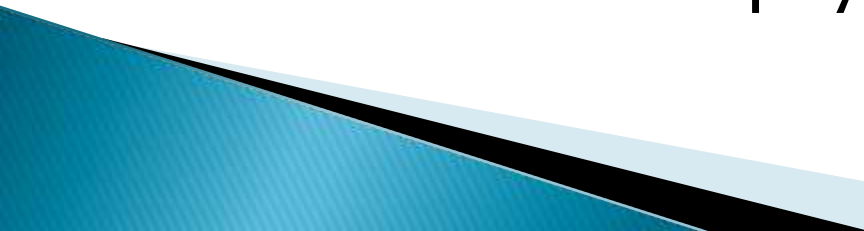
- Advocacy and Reports
- Reinforcing and Support to policy development
- Line Ministries/National Task Force




RRP: Medica Mondiale Liberia

- Holistic, multi-sectorial approach.
- Mainstreaming trauma sensitive, women centered feminist approach.


Why Another Manual for Psychosocial Intervention?

- ▶ External – Flood of actors offering counseling after 3 day trainings
 - ▶ Growing concern from Gender Ministry (Joint Program) about quality of counseling and services
 - ▶ Proposal to create standardised manual for Liberia
 - ▶ Internal – Sustainability – how to Increase the capacity of community volunteers, district counselors and psychosocial counselors
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Developing the manual

- ▶ Plethora of manuals, medica mondiale's own training manuals – very good material
 - ▶ Gathered in Salzburg – staff and clinical psychologist in 2010
 - ▶ Brainstormed contextual, cultural, women friendly, user friendly framework and suitable material
 - ▶ Included critical module on self reflection and self awareness
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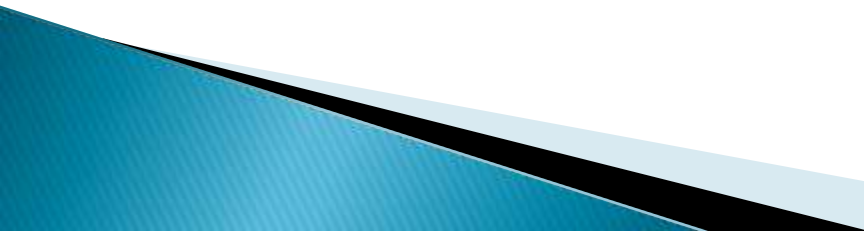
6 Modules of the Manual

- ▶ Module 1: Self-Reflection & Self-Care
 - ▶ Module 2: Gender and Violence
 - ▶ Module 3: Basic Helping Skills
 - ▶ Module 4: Advanced Helping Skills
 - ▶ Module 5: Facilitating Change in Communities
 - ▶ Module 6: Ethics
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Training Manual

- ▶ 2 Versions – literacy levels
 - ▶ Training of trainers
 - ▶ Tested it on 31 community volunteers, 9 District Counselors, 3 psychosocial counselors and 9 technical staff and senior staff– over 1 yr
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Dilemmas and Challenges I

- ▶ Western concepts and their usefulness in the Liberian society – psychosocial concept itself is western – and therefore alien
 - ▶ Self–reflection and self–awareness: most alien yet we persisted with the strong notion that this is a critical piece – empowerment will not work
 - ▶ Challenged to understand what this resistance means and how to deal with it – raises cultural sensitivity vs imposition
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Dilemmas and Challenges II

- ▶ Juxtaposition of traditional African models with the modern Western model of helping:
 - arbitration vs. mediation;
 - advice of the elderly vs. empowerment of the survivor to make her own decisions;
 - focus on the community vs. focus on the individual.
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Dilemmas and Challenges III

- social support systems [often regarded as nepotism and corruption by outsiders] vs. performance-based systems
 - punitive vs. alternative (restorative, traditional) approaches to justice
 - ▶ Danger of pouring out the value of African tradition with the misogynistic bath-water
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Lessons Learnt

- ▶ Some concepts are universal (traumatic responses to war),
 - ▶ some are culturally specific (self-awareness and self growth as a necessary precondition for healing and constructive change – a western notion?)
 - ▶ If a concept is too alien, it won't be useful for achieving change, however concepts can be of immense use to beneficiaries if they make a significant contribution to improving peoples reality (post-traumatic growth, self-care, gender equality).
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Conclusions

- ▶ It is impossible to respond adequately to sexual violence in post-conflict scenarios with pre-defined standardized instruments which have not been adapted to the beneficiaries' reality and context.
 - ▶ This adaptation entails contents, language and didactic methods.
 - ▶ It is a long process of validation and questioning and continuous learning, unlikely to be achieved in a period of less than a year.
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Thank you
for your attention

