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CHILDREN OF EARTH
ASSOCIATION

TRAUMA-SENSITIVE SCHOOL-BASED PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT MODEL

IN CONFLICT AFFECTED AREAS



TRAUMA-SENSITIVE SCHOOL-BASED PSS MODEL

Introduction:

Why a Trauma-Sensitive School-Based Psychosocial Support Model?

In regions affected by protracted conflict, traditional mental health interventions often remain inaccessible, overly clinical, or disconnected from the daily realities of children. Inspired by the work of Dr. Samah Jabr in Gaza, who pioneered psychosocial counseling services within schools during ongoing crises situations, this model reimagines schools as healing-centered spaces.

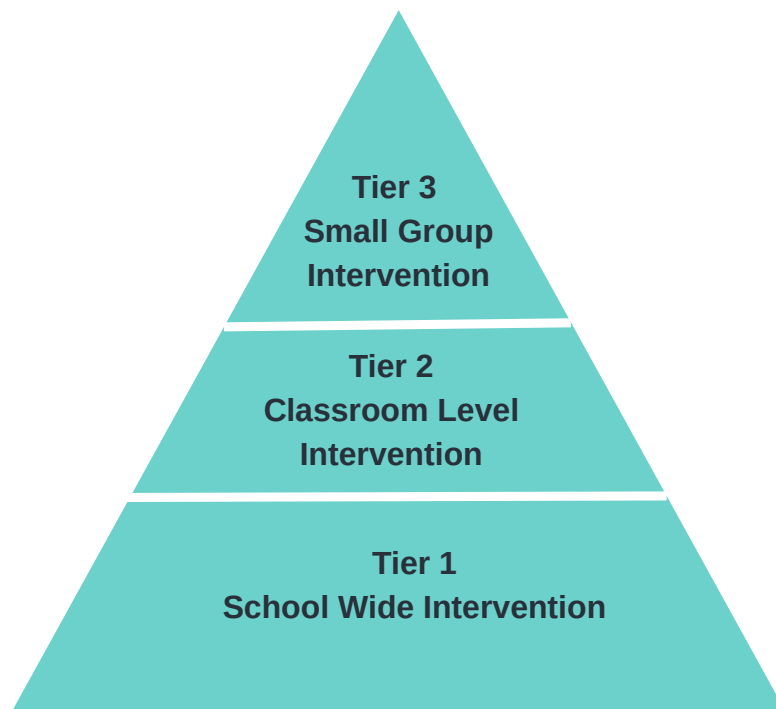
Building on this vision, our approach goes beyond establishing counseling units. We create dedicated child-friendly spaces within schools where group-based psychosocial sessions are conducted through an Islamic psychology lens. These spaces aim not only to support trauma recovery but also to offer children a sense of purpose and spiritual grounding—fostering both emotional resilience and meaning-making in the midst of crisis.

Rather than viewing trauma as a solely individual psychological issue, this approach integrates educational, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. By embedding trained counselors in schools, creating child-friendly psychosocial spaces, and equipping staff with tools grounded in Islamic psychology, the model aims to support children's holistic recovery, resilience, and social reintegration even as crises persist.



Tiered Intervention Framework for School-Based Psychosocial Support

We provide three-tiered counseling services by integrating **trauma-informed care** principles. This approach ensures that every child receives the appropriate support in a safe and responsive environment, taking into account the potential trauma they may have experienced.



Small Group Support: This level offers targeted support through group counseling sessions in child-friendly rooms. Small groups of 12–15 children engage in focused psychosocial activities on topics like trauma, grief, anxiety, and peer relationships.

Classroom Level Support: At this level, we provide classroom guidance sessions within classrooms, where counselors work directly with all students to address common needs, such as peer bullying, exam anxiety and privacy.

School-Wide Support: This level focuses on providing universal services and interventions for all students. Activities at this level are designed to create a positive and supportive school environment. It includes school-wide initiatives such as awareness campaigns, poster and banner-making, report card celebrations, children festivals, and inter-class competitions.

Model Summary: Trauma-Sensitive School Based PSS Model

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

- To enhance the psychosocial well-being and resilience of crises affected children to cope with trauma and reintegrate into the society.
- It also includes ToT programs to equip local experts with an Islamic value-based vision, crisis-responsive supervision, and culturally grounded practices through community-rooted learning.

PROJECT EXAMPLE:

Category	Details
Project Title	Trauma-Sensitive School Based PSS Model in Syria
Overall Aim	To enhance the psychosocial well-being and resilience of Syrian children to cope with trauma and reintegrate into a peaceful and stable society
Target Groups	- Conflict-affected children - Teachers and school personnel - Parents and caregivers
Key Objectives	- Develop a replicable trauma-sensitive school counseling model - Create child-friendly spaces in schools - Provide training and supervision to local counselors - Integrate Islamic values into Psychosocial Support (PSS) modules - Strengthen children's capacity for healing, participation, and social cohesion
Core Activities	- Recruit and place school counselors in target schools - Establish psychosocial support rooms - Design and implement Psychosocial Support (PSS) modules based on Islamic Psychology - Conduct regular supervision and capacity building - Facilitate group counseling, classroom sessions, and extracurricular social activities
Expected Outcomes	- Strengthened emotional resilience and trauma coping skills among children - Safer, nurturing school environments - Improved professional capacity of local mental health workers - Increased community involvement in child well-being

Model Framework and Implementation Strategy

METHODOLOGY

This model is a school-based, trauma-sensitive approach integrating psychological, educational, and spiritual support. Inspired by Islamic psychology and localized experience, it aims to create healing-centered environments within schools.

Core Methods:

- **On-site Counselors:** Trained professionals embedded in schools.
- **Child-Friendly PSS Rooms:** Safe, calming spaces for emotional expression and group work.
- **Faith-Based Sessions:** Islamic values like sabr, tawakkul, and compassion used to guide healing.
- **Teacher Training:** Local teachers trained to lead faith-integrated, trauma-sensitive support using culturally relevant methods and community-based learning.
- **ToT Programs:** Local staff equipped with tools for crisis-responsive, culturally sensitive practice.



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Phase 1 – Setup & Training:

- Counselors recruited.
- PSS rooms created in multiple schools.
- Trauma-informed care and Islamic psychology training for teachers.

Phase 2 – Interventions Delivered:

- PSS group sessions
- School-wide activities (e.g., Ramadan exhibition, theater).
- School counseling & guidance (e.g., bullying, exam stress).
- At-risk group counseling (e.g., grief, anger, anxiety).

Phase 3 – Feedback & Outcomes:

- Outcomes were assessed through pre- & post-test evaluations, observation reports, and thematic analysis of focus group discussions with children, teachers, and parents.



Research Findings on the Trauma-Sensitive School-Based PSS Model

Quantitative & Qualitative Assessment

The effectiveness of the model was evaluated using both quantitative and qualitative methods across children, teachers, and parents.

Quantitative Findings:

- 67 teachers completed pre- and post-tests using the Trauma-Informed Care Scale. Scores increased from 53.85 to 60.54, reflecting a **12.42% improvement** in knowledge, attitude, and trauma-responsive practices.
- 252 parents participated in a Likert-scale survey:
 - **81%** agreed that the Islamic psychology approach **positively impacted** their child's **well-being**.
 - **68%** observed **increased school motivation** in their children.
 - **88%** **supported the continuation** of faith-integrated psychosocial services.



Qualitative Findings:

- 8 children (ages 10–13) participated in focus group discussions. They reported **increased emotional safety, improved self-expression, and stronger peer relationships**. Many described the counseling room as a safe, calming space.
- Participatory visual methods with younger children (ages 6–9) revealed similar outcomes: the activity room was perceived **as a “second home” and linked to emotional relief**.
- Teachers and parents highlighted **observable improvements in classroom behavior, social interaction, emotional regulation, and motivation to attend school**.

These findings demonstrate that the integrated model (combining trauma sensitivity, Islamic values, and school-based delivery) contributed meaningfully to children’s holistic recovery and teacher capacity.



Strategic Rationale for Model Continuation and Scaling

Way Forward: Why This Model Should Be Scaled

Our experience in northern Syria highlights the unique value of implementing trauma-sensitive, school-based psychosocial support (PSS) in crisis settings. Scaling this model offers several strategic advantages:

Rationale for Scaling the Model

1. **Wider reach with fewer resources:** Using existing school structures reduces cost and increases accessibility, especially in rural areas.
2. **Children already enrolled or nearby:** Even if not attending, children are more likely to access a school than a separate center.
3. **Support from the Ministry of Education:** The current Syrian education authorities are open to integrating psychosocial support into formal schooling.
4. **A faith-informed gap:** There is a clear lack of trauma support programs rooted in Islamic values within schools in Muslim-majority crisis contexts.
5. **Schools as trusted spaces:** They offer safe, structured, and familiar environments ideal for integrated emotional and spiritual healing.

Strategic Priorities and Future Directions

To ensure sustainability and broader impact, we propose the following priorities:

1. **Evidence Generation:** Conduct academic research in partnership with universities/academics to evaluate the model's effectiveness, relevance, and long-term outcomes.
2. **Capacity Building:** Develop and expand ToT programs to train local professionals in trauma-informed, culturally and faith-integrated psychosocial support.
3. **Scalable Implementation:** Adapt the model for use in other conflict-affected areas by localizing tools and methods based on community needs.
4. **Collaborative Engagement:** Partner with ministries, academic institutions, and faith-based actors to promote integrated psychosocial support within formal education systems.



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