Project duration
February 2014 – February 2015

Intervention Zone
CAR, Chad

Project objectives
The main objective of the project is to increase the existing knowledge about trauma transmission (channels, contents, factors, etc.), and its impact on the mother-child relationship.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND
In a humanitarian context, emergencies situations such as disasters or conflicts are often characterized by significant collective & individual traumas. Thus, it is all the more necessary to know the mechanisms of trauma transmission, and the impact that it can have on the mother-child bond, particularly the availability of the mother to take care of her baby. Infant survival, which depends on the mother’s availability and psychological capacity to breastfeed and take care of him, can be in serious jeopardy. There is currently clinical evidence of the transmission of a trauma to the baby, but the channels and contents of this transmission need to be clarified, as well as the effects on the baby.

The issue here would be to deal with psychological trauma of the mother, which happened in her life before the birth of the baby, the transmission of this trauma to the baby and the potential consequences it could have on the mother-child relationship, and therefore the development of the child.

A very large literature about transgenerational transmission of trauma exists, but work dealing with the direct transmission of trauma between the mother and the baby are still recent. It is therefore still difficult to find answers to questions about the transmission processes and the effects on the baby.

SUMMARY
The project will be organized around mother-child dyads, which will be received and will take part in on-camera semi-structured interviews, where the mother will be encouraged to talk about her baby, her relationship with him, and about the traumatic event that occurred. The distinctive features of the mother-child relationship will be analyzed through an observation table of parent-baby interactions. The research will be qualitative, descriptive and observational, relying on the mothers’ speeches and the observation of the interactions between traumatized mothers and their babies. One or several interviews are suggested to the mothers in presence of their baby.

The mothers received in the project have undergone a traumatic event meeting the criteria A of DSM V, before or during the pregnancy; the babies have not gone through the traumatic event and are between 0 and 3.

The research will aim primarily at better identifying the mechanism of mother to child transmission of trauma, a better tracking of traumas in mothers and babies, and at being able to produce recommendations after the research regarding preventive measures for trauma transmission.

The results of this research could be capital for the development of intervention tools for the mother-child dyad, especially in complex situations where the therapist or caregivers are not sufficiently trained, or even have undergone the collective traumatic event.
HYPOTHESES

- The traumatic events undergone by the mother have an impact on her availability and psychological capacity to answer the solicitations and provide for the needs of her baby: this leads to a perception of absence by the baby, as well as a lack of response to solicitations, which can create sensorial chaos (internal or external) and be the source of psychological trauma.

- If there is a transmission of trauma from mother to child, one can observe that the mother-child relationship is affected. Thus, the different interactions (visual, vocal, corporal) will be poor and dysfunctional.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

- To better identify the mechanisms of mother to child transmission of trauma and its impact on child development and the mother-baby relationship.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To better track the traumas in mother and babies
- To be able to produce recommendations after the research, regarding preventive measures for the transmission of trauma.

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- A better knowledge of the direct factors and the contents of trauma transmission in infants and young children, in order to have a better clinical care;
- Specific aspects regarding the care of traumatized patients are identified, and therefore the care practices are improved;

Implementing agency
- Action Contre la Faim - France

Sponsor and funder
- Action Contre la Faim – France

Scientific partners
- Université Paris-Descartes

For more details...
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