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**Stressors, Supports, and the Social Ecology of Displacement:  
Psychosocial Dimensions of an Emergency Education Program  
for Chechen Adolescents Displaced in Ingushetia, Russia**

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## Abstract

This study explores the psychosocial benefits of an emergency education intervention serving adolescents displaced by the war in Chechnya. Interviews with 55 Chechen adolescents living in spontaneous settlements in Ingushetia, Russia were collected in the fall of 2000. The study set out to describe key stressors and sources of social support available to youth being served by the International Rescue Committee's (IRC) emergency education program. Of particular interest was the degree to which the education program addressed psychosocial goals such as increasing social support and alleviating strains including idleness, the lack of safe and structured places for youth to spend time, and concerns about lost years of schooling expressed by children and families. Findings indicated that young people and their families were facing a number of physical and emotional stressors. Regarding physical stressors, adolescents described the "living conditions" in the spontaneous settlements as the most difficult thing they faced. The physical and material deprivations experienced in the settlements were described in terms of living in an "abnormal" or "inhuman" way, including poor or crowded living conditions; infrequent supplies of food, medicines and educational materials; and concerns about parents and older adolescents being able to find work. Regarding emotional stressors, participants identified a variety of sources including loss of home, loss of time/idleness, separation from loved ones, tensions with the Ingush host community, and concerns about their ability to be productive in the future. Furthermore, a sense of humiliation linked to deprivation pervaded the experience of Chechen youth in these IDP settlements.

The data indicated a number of ways in which the emergency education program provided benefits by enriching sources of support, providing meaningful activity and opportunities to learn, and a place and space for young people to spend time and connect to others. In particular, youth leaders described how the program had improved their confidence in working with others and had influenced their career goals. However, the contrast between the desire of adolescents "to live like other kids" and the options available to them presented a dilemma for the emergency education program: adolescents were craving normality, but for any intervention to be delivered, it had first to begin with creative and adaptive strategies that were by no means a complete replacement for formal, mainstream education. The programmatic and policy implications of these findings are presented in the discussion.

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## **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IRC	The International Rescue Committee
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

# Stressors, Supports and the Social Ecology of Displacement

Dr. Theresa Stichick Betancourt<sup>1</sup>

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. The Challenge of Addressing Children’s Mental Health in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies

During complex humanitarian emergencies, settlements formed by refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) often involve the re-creation of both physical living spaces and social structures that existed prior to displacement. However, it is not clear what forces, if any, shape the social support structures that are available to children. In emergencies such as large population displacements due to war, emotional resources are limited by the fact that nearly everyone has been touched deeply by personal loss, exposure to violence, and economic hardship.

In humanitarian emergencies, aid workers and local professionals are faced with the challenge of working in concert with members of the displaced community to create a safe, nourishing, and supportive environment for large populations under conditions of extreme duress. In recent years, the realities of working in refugee situations have highlighted the importance of attending to populations usually designated as “vulnerable”, particularly women and children.

In refugee camps and conflict zones, a number of clinical mental health interventions have been attempted. Some models transport mental health professionals to the scene and use interventions such as “debriefing” (Kenardy, 2000) or traditional forms of mental health counseling. Although helpful to certain individuals if conducted in a targeted manner, such models have limited ability to deal with the enormity of demand. Furthermore, the appropriateness of interventions like debriefing for certain populations, including people affected by war, has recently come under considerable criticism (Raphael et al. 1995; Kenardy 2000; Summerfield 2000). United Nations Agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) often struggle with the dilemma of having enormous numbers of children and families exposed to potentially distressing circumstances, yet very few professional and financial resources to provide culturally and context-appropriate mental health services.

### B. Education in Emergencies: A Return to Normality and Pathway to the Future

Although not studied explicitly in published literature on the psychosocial impact of armed conflict on children, the provision of educational activities early on in a crisis has been argued to be an important means of restoring predictability and social supports to children (Aguilar & Retamal, 1998). Generally, emergency education programming aims to reach children and

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adolescents from the outset of conflict throughout the period of displacement. Such programming comprises a range of programmatic interventions often beginning with non-formal education activities that can be quickly established with few resources, then continuing with more formal schooling activities that require extended investment in training, community involvement, and coordination with local authorities.

There are a number of theorized psychosocial mechanisms by which emergency education responses during complex humanitarian emergencies might operate to improve social and mental health outcomes in young people. For example, the restoration of opportunities to study or develop vocational skills can provide children and youth with a sense of predictability and security amidst the chaos of displacement, traumatic events, and loss. In displacement situations, education programs can serve a protective function as children are monitored in a more centralized manner, and systematic mechanisms for screening their mental and physical health may be established. Additionally, education and the development of vocational skills can instill children and adolescents with a sense of hope and the tools necessary to be successful in the future. In industrialized countries in particular, education serves as the primary means of securing the abilities and qualifications necessary for good jobs and salaries. Finally, participatory education programs may foster enriched social networks and social support between children, staff, and other adults in the community by engaging participants in common action on behalf of children.

### **C. Social Support and Adjustment to Violent Adversity**

The potential psychosocial mechanisms by which education programs may improve a child's adjustment to adversity are compelling in light of research indicating that social support, neighborhood social cohesion, and even attending caring or "connected" schools have all been associated with positive health and behavioral outcomes (Resnick et al. 1997; Sampson et al. 1997; Allen et al. 1998; Roberts and Bengtson 1993; Wickrama, Lorenz and Conger, 1997). In this manner, sources of social support, like stressors, are observed to operate across all levels of a child's social ecology. Based in the thinking of Bronfenbrenner (1979), a child's social ecology refers to the nurturing physical and emotional environment including and extending beyond the immediate family to peer, school and community settings as well as operant cultural and political belief systems (Figure 1). At each layer of a child's social ecology, from the familial to the community network, protective factors, as well as risk factors, are operating on children's mental health and adjustment in the face of war.

Social support appears to operate as a key protective factor for children's mental health in many situations of adversity. Child development and mental health research in Western populations has indicated that peer and family support serve a protective function in the face of stressful life events (Sandler et al. 1989; Hoffmann, Cerbone and Su 2000; Peterson and Zill 1986). Furthermore, the existence of a supportive relationship with at least one important adult, even outside of a troubled home, has been associated with resilient outcomes in disadvantaged children (Werner, 1992).

In children exposed to violence, social support and family cohesion have been demonstrated to provide a moderating or "buffering" effect on the risk of subsequent psychopathology or distress

(Kleiwer et al., 1998; Overstreet et al.,1999; Gorman-Smith and Tolan,1998 ). Likewise, in children exposed to wartime violence, social support has been associated with reduced risk of emotional and behavioral problems (Llabre and Hadi 1997; Farhood 1999; Kleiwer et al., 2001).

The quality and nature of relationships in more distal settings of the child's social ecology, such as schools, are implicated in the mental health and adjustment of youth, but remain understudied. In research on war-affected children, there is evidence to suggest that child care facilities characterized by caring relationships between staff and children have been associated with positive mental health outcomes (Wolff & Fesseha, 1998). Likewise, in conflict situations, schools can provide a "supportive context" for children that extends beyond the immediate family and peer group. For many children, schools may operate as an additional "security base" outside of the home (Elbedour et al. 1993). The relationship between children and teachers can have great impact on the child, particularly when teachers are able to provide social supports and model "positive qualities" such as forgiveness and caring, which may be atypical within war zones (ibid).

Initial findings from the literature on peer and family social support in war-affected children indicate the need to further explore mechanisms operating in more distal settings of a child's social ecology. Additional sources of support, such as those found in schools or neighborhoods, may have important implications for the mental health and adjustment of children in complex humanitarian emergencies. Thus, the exploration of mental health stressors facing one group of Chechen IDP youth during displacement and the potential psychosocial benefits of an emergency education intervention serving them are at the heart of the present study.

## **II. THE IRC'S NON-FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAM IN INGUSHETIA, RUSSIA**

The IRC launched non-formal education and recreation activities for Chechen IDP children and their families in Ingushetia, Russia in January of 2000. The program had the following goals: 1) To undertake rapid assessment and implementation of normalizing structured activities for children and adolescents to address psychosocial and cognitive needs; 2) To increase capacity in the displaced community to respond to the protection and psychosocial needs of their children by encouraging parental and community involvement; 3) To promote the rights and capacity of the displaced population by encouraging parent and community participation and by providing positive leadership roles for young people; 4) To build collaborations with local Ministries, UN Agencies, and other NGOs and increase opportunities for IDP children to participate in formal systems of education.

As described in the participatory aspects of the program goals, a main strategy driving the IRC model is one of facilitating local capacity to care for children. In this model, funding was provided to secure the supplies and space for schools to meet. Outside technical assistance was provided to train IDP teachers and help them return to their work. Training was designed to prepare teachers for the challenge of working with few supplies and blended classrooms composed of students with differing skill levels. In order to start programs as quickly as possible, the IRC model in Ingushetia relied on very rudimentary activities at first, including programs of basic numeracy and literacy along with recreation. With time, the program was

developed in alignment with the formal education system by adopting the national curricula, standard textbooks, and testing procedures.

The IRC's emergency education program in Ingushetia prioritizes the involvement of youth beneficiaries, their families, and the larger community in developing the intervention. "Empowered collaboration" of this type is thought both to foster a sense of ownership of the program among beneficiaries and to reestablish a sense of belonging (Fullilove, 1996). As an example, the IRC program in Ingushetia involves young people from the beneficiary population as "youth leaders". They work closely with the teaching staff to engage other youth and shape programming to be responsive to the priorities and needs of the young people being served.

### **III. STUDY AIM**

The research questions of this study involved first identifying mental health stressors, potential protective processes, and coping strategies operating within this population of Chechen IDPs. Secondly, the working hypothesis that this emergency education program confers psychosocial as well as learning benefits was explored. In particular, it was hypothesized that this emergency education program provides psychosocial benefits to young people via the following mechanisms: by restoring a sense of safety, predictability, and meaningful activity to the day-to-day lives of displaced adolescents; by increasing social supports available to young people both from peers, teachers and other significant adults; and by providing a return to education, which is highly valued and seen as critical to future success by both Chechen youth and their families.

At the time of this data collection, very little was known about specific stressors, coping strategies, and ongoing psychosocial concerns of Chechen IDP youth and their families. By providing further insight into these issues, this research also provided insight into aspects of the education program that could be improved in order to better address both learning and psychosocial issues facing its beneficiaries.

### **IV. BACKGROUND ON THE CURRENT CHECHEN DISPLACEMENT**

Throughout their history, the Chechen people have not been strangers to struggle and forced displacement. The Northern Caucasus region has been the site of conflict for thousands of years dating back to the battles between the Ottomans and Persians who fought for the region until the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Although according to the Russian Constitution, Chechnya is officially part of the Russian Federation, the Chechens have always been known for their independent nature. In modern times, several factions within Chechnya have pushed for independence from Russia. In the early 1990s a secessionist movement gained steady support, culminating in Chechnya's declared independence from Russia in 1991. A particularly unsteady period followed, which culminated in the invasion of Chechnya by Russian forces in 1994. After a protracted war resulting in heavy casualties, Russian troops withdrew from Chechnya in August 1996. By that time, approximately 50,000 people had died, thousands were homeless, and much of Chechnya had been destroyed.



In August of 1999, a fresh conflict erupted when Chechen militants launched invasions into the Republic of Dagestan. In October 1999, Russian forces once again invaded Chechnya. Since this invasion, thousands of people have fled the intense fighting. The majority of those who left have sought refuge in the neighboring Republic of Ingushetia. At present, the United Nations estimates that there are between 150,000 and 185,000 Chechen displaced living in Ingushetia (OCHA, 1999). Approximately 78 % of the displaced are women and children, and 45% are under 18 years old. The displaced are spread out among large camps and settlements or in private homes in towns and villages of the northern half of the Russian Republic of Ingushetia, which neighbors Chechnya.

It is important to note that IDP settlements served by the IRC's program at the time of this data collection were "spontaneous settlements" formed in abandoned farms, empty train cars, factories, or other buildings where groups of IDPs set up make-shift living quarters. These settlements are independent of the official camps for IDPs run by the Russian Ministry of the Interior. Oftentimes, spontaneous settlements are situated on private property with the permission of a sympathetic landowner; in other instances, squatter settlements are established on abandoned or undesirable property. For example, one large site represented in the interviews was once a local café (Café Tanzila), another was the site of a factory that produced cans for food goods (the Canning Factory), and another was an oil drilling site (*Burploshadka*, or "bore hole site"). Because these spontaneous settlements grew out of a process whereby whole groups of villagers and/or extended families traveled en masse and established living quarters together, they are particularly characterized by social networks and social ties built on family and community connections transplanted from home villages.

A shared history of ethnic persecution and strong religious identity link the Chechen and Ingush people. Of Chechnya's population of 1.2 million, a majority are Sufi Muslim (Nivat, 2001). The population of Ingushetia is also a Muslim majority. While Sufi is the dominant branch of Islam in the Caucasus region, following the 1994-1996 Chechen conflict, the general lawlessness allowed more extreme branches of Islam, such as Wahhabism, to flourish. In many of Chechnya's larger villages and cities, local systems of governance were established based on extreme varieties of traditional Sha'ria law which emphasized conservative behaviors and beliefs on behalf of its followers, with particular restrictions on the roles of women.

Despite the close ethnic relationships and familial ties that made Ingushetia a welcome refuge for many Chechens displaced by the current conflict, a number of problematic issues remain for the IDPs. Most relevant to the well-being of children is the fact that since the early days of the current displacement, the Ingush Ministry of Education has allowed only a small number, and mainly primary school-aged Chechen IDPs to attend local schools. The reasons given for this policy pertain to the current limitations in funding and staffing that already face the Ingush educational system. Ingush schools are currently overcrowded and in disrepair, while significant budget shortfalls have created difficulty in paying teachers' salaries. Despite the efforts of several NGOs, including the IRC, to address some of these limitations by offering assistance with school supplies or school renovations to accommodate the Chechen children, the Ingush Ministry of Education has not made significant changes in this policy to date.

## **V. STUDY METHODS**

Data were collected via interviews conducted by a team of Chechen evaluation assistants who, during the summer of 2000, received a week-long training in basic research design, ethics, confidentiality and interviewing skills. Throughout the data collection process, the research staff received close supervision in the field from the IRC's education program officer who was in contact with this author via routine phone and email contact.

A semi-structured interview protocol was followed for the interview. Responses were open-ended; probe questions were used to clarify information and obtain further detail as necessary. The interview protocol was developed in collaboration with Chechen staff from the IRC education program. It was translated and then back translated from English to Russian to ensure cultural appropriateness and clarity for use with a Chechen adolescent population. Because few people read Chechen, the written protocol was in Russian. However, research assistants could administer interviews in either Chechen or Russian language depending on the preferences of the participant. An oral, Chechen translation of the protocol was decided upon by the Chechen research staff during development of the interview questions.

All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed in Russian. English translations of the transcripts were completed in Moscow. To guard against errors in the translation of the original transcripts from Russian to English, quotes used in this analysis were reviewed by a second native Russian speaker upon completion of the data analysis. Any sections of data that remained unclear or potentially misleading were dropped from the analysis.

### **A. Sample**

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select the individual adolescents and groups who participated in these interviews. The researcher and the Chechen IRC staff devised criteria to represent a range of ages, living situation, urban/rural origins, level of education, and attendance in the IRC education program. These factors were chosen in order to address the variability in experiences among youth in the camp most likely to influence their assessment of the psychosocial aspects of the education intervention. At least one interview was conducted at each of the IRC's 11 sites in operation as of the fall of 2000. All youth leaders in the program (N=10) were also interviewed.

A total of 55 Chechen adolescents (24 males and 31 females) participated in either individual or group interviews. Twenty-four individual interviews and six group interviews were conducted. The six group interviews involved: a) a group of four females from the Smu Chiteri settlement; b) a group of four males from the FinOtdel Settlement; and c) 3 mixed-gender group interviews with 3 boys and 3 girls each from Logovaz (2) and the 000 Bagatir settlement (1). Participants were aged between 11 and 18 years of age. Mean age of participants was 13.6 years (15.9 for girls and 12 for boys). The slightly higher average age of girls interviewed was influenced by the fact that the majority of youth leaders in the program, all of whom were interviewed, tended to be older adolescent girls. Like many of the IDPs, the largest proportion of adolescents (53%, N=20) were from Chechnya's capital, Grozny and its surrounding regions. Other participants were from villages such as Urus-Martan (N=4) and Samashki (N=4). Participants were

interviewed in sites where the IRC program had just begun as well as at sites where education programs had been in operation for up to 7-8 months.

All research protocols and procedures received the review and approval of the Human Subjects Committee of the Harvard School of Public Health. Both signed parental consent and adolescent assent were secured in advance of data collection. All interviews were conducted in a private area, most commonly in education program tents when school was not in session.

## **B. Data**

In the first stages of data analysis, translations of the raw interview transcripts were read and coded for key themes and categories using the N5 (Nu\*Dist) Software. Data in the form of direct quotes from adolescent participants were sorted to substantiate categories and themes. Quotes from multiple informants were used to triangulate findings. Analytic memos were created to document emerging themes among related categories. Finally, quotes used in this analysis were reviewed by a native Russian speaker to guard against any errors in translation or interpretation. Key categories and themes that emerged in the data analysis are described below.

### *1. Stressors in the IDP Settlements*

The stressors described by IDP youth living in the spontaneous settlements were both physical and emotional. Chechen youth described the “living conditions” in the spontaneous settlements as the most difficult thing they faced on a daily basis. Physical and economic stressors described included poor or crowded living conditions; infrequent supplies of food, medicines, and educational materials; and concern about family members being able to find work. The emotional stressors described pertained to worries about family and friends back in Chechnya, concerns about lack of dignity or being treated as “inhuman” or “not normal”, concerns about “wasting time,” and tense relationships with the Ingush host community. Many participants also expressed worries about being able to become educated in a legitimate way in order to be successful, get a “good job” and help support a family.

### *2. Living Conditions*

Living conditions in the spontaneous settlements were particularly grim due to limited access by aid organizations. For the adolescents interviewed, the deprivation experienced in the settlements was described in terms of living in an abnormal or “inhuman” way:

Well, there are eight people in my family. At the moment, five [other] people live with us..in conditions that are not suitable for living...we live (coughing) together with our relatives, 16 people in two rooms. There’s neither floor nor room. The ceiling... when rain starts everything leaks. Such...abnormal conditions. (female, 18 years, Finotdel)

We live in inhuman conditions: wet rooms where it is impossible to sleep at all, there are cockroaches on the floor, so it is impossible to sleep there too...it is quite disgusting. (male youth leader, 16 years, Canning Factory)

Difficult living conditions contributed to a great deal of illness and made it especially hard to care for family members who had chronic conditions.

Our life here is very hard because we have no normal conditions for living. Our mother is ill and it's very hard for us. (female youth leader, 12 years)

### 3. *Humiliation*

As the data on living conditions indicate, a sense of humiliation pervades the experience of Chechen youth in these IDP settlements. As described by these adolescents, their experience of humiliation is grounded in a sense of deprivation. One young woman drew a parallel between living as an IDP in the spontaneous settlements and living “like animals.”

It's hard when they force you to live here...this is very difficult. We are deprived of the most basic right...to live. We just exist here, because our children cannot get education and they cannot live as normal kids do. We are morally deprived, both morally and physically. We live like animals. Frankly speaking we may become equal to animals. (female, 18 years, Café Tanzila)

The theme of humiliation has important implications for the stressors young people face, the type of social support they seem to need, and how the emergency education program might be better organized to respond to the psychosocial needs of this population. The Chechen adolescents interviewed expressed a simple desire to “live like other kids” and to participate in mainstream experiences and expectations.

Like other children on Earth we want to live, to play in peace...to go to school. (female youth leader, 12 years, IngAvto )

Interviewer: What are your hopes for the future?

Teen: That the situation in Grozny will become peaceful again, to get a good education in the future and, well as normal people, to live as all teenagers do. (female, 16 years, Smu Chiteri)

### 4. *Tensions with the Host Community*

Feelings of humiliation appeared to be reinforced by tense relations between the Ingush host community and the Chechen IDPs. Many teens struggled with a sense of gratitude to the Ingush for taking them in tempered by instances of teasing or harassment by local youth or authorities. A young woman described how the Chechens and Ingush were distinguished from one another when disputes arose:

Interviewer: What is most difficult here?

Teen: Relations with native people. For example...Well, we don't have difficulties, but they don't take us for their own people. As for the rest, the situation is quite good.

Interviewer: Are there any cases where the local people don't understand you? Can you give an example?

Teen: For example, if there are some quarrels with the local people...they just divide us into two groups—these are the Chechen men, those are the Ingush men. They divide us by nationality, when there are some disputable situations...I know a lot of local people

here. The Ingush people are good, but there are some bad persons in each people. The good and the bad are both among the Chechen people and among the Ingush people.  
(female youth leader, 16 years, Gasi-Yurt)

It is important to note that some families had been the recipients of great generosity while living in Ingushetia.

We knew the Ingush, our friends, for 10-15 years. They are from here. Their family lives here. And they have given us a room, which they built for themselves as a summer kitchen. We filled holes, bought plywood, affixed it with nails. Then we affixed canvas. There we live. (male, 18 years, Financial Department)

In this manner, a tension between gratitude, feeling harassed and self-conscious, and a desire for acceptance characterized daily life in the IDP settlements. As some young people described, a constant sense of being out of place would erupt to the surface in daily transactions with the local population.

You live among strange people here...It is possible to feel that you are among [strangers]...It happens sometimes that you forget about it, then they remind you [at random] (female youth leader, 17 years, Financial Department)

Teens from Logovaz settlement in particular reported several instances of conflict with the host population. According to local staff, there had been a series of clashes between Chechen and Ingush teens, including several instances where Ingush teens had entered the settlement by force to fight with Chechen boys over misunderstandings. The tension between the hosts and IDPs in Logovaz seemed fueled by the fact that the settlement is located in the center of the Ingush capital, Nazran. The IDP settlement is on the property of a car garage parking lot; fenced off and guarded at its entrance. The physical separateness of the settlement paralleled the social barriers many Chechen youth sensed in their relations with locals.

It's bad here...When you go out on the street, as soon as they learn you're Chechen they start picking on you. Its bad here. Not like in our place. (male, 14 years, Logovaz)

When you go outdoors, you cannot play normally: Ingush 'cops' are picking on [us] ...Well, what should I say? They come up and start pick on [us] for nothing...“Who are you?”,“Are you Chechen?” Just like that. (male, 17 years, Logovaz)

It is important to consider that for many adolescents, these experiences of being out of place and struggling with humiliation or harassment present important challenges to their developing sense of self and identity. For young men in particular, it is troubling to observe how such stressors could easily fuel a sense of vengeance given the frequency with which they reported being “picked on”.

### *5. Family Separation*

As described by many of the teens, worries about family members who had remained behind in Chechnya were a frequent stressor and source of distraction for those in the IDP settlements.

Family separations were common in the settlements. In several cases, certain relatives, usually men and the elderly, had stayed behind to look after the family home and belongings:

My father did not go with us, he stayed home...to keep at least what's left somehow, because the Federals have taken away everything we know. Only our father is at home...others left to live here, because it was impossible to live there...he has stayed home for the whole war, he is 60 years old, but he is being harassed anyway.  
(female, 18 years, Canning Factory)

The IDP youth interviewed were very cognizant of the dangerous conditions back home. Some described relatives who had been in Ingushetia for a time, but had been forced to return to their homes in the war zone due to financial hardship. Of those who chose to remain behind in Chechnya, many were grandparents.

My granny rented two small rooms [in Ingushetia] for 6000 rubles. Now they don't have money, they could do nothing but go home, so they left. At home, everything's destroyed. They could hardly restore one room, and 10 or 11 persons live in that room.  
(female, 13 years, Smu Chiteri)

Many young people were aware that the insecurity and widespread destruction back in Chechnya meant that separation from loved ones could last for some time.

We brought the necessary things here. All the rest burnt down. Our neighbors' house exploded, ours is covered with cracks, walls cracked...renovation is needed, we cannot return there. The roof is broken. It will be even worse because of the rain. There are no conditions for living either. . Now it's dangerous there. If it was peaceful, just a little, just a bit more quiet, we could return there. (female, 16 years, Smu Chiteri)

This awareness that family members who stayed behind are navigating constant perils in Chechnya seemed to leave the adolescents in Ingushetia feeling helpless.

In Chernorechye (suburb of Grozny)...Every day, one can hear shells exploding there, every two hours they [her grandparents] have to run to the cellar. It's very dangerous to stay there. We don't know what to do. (female, 13 years, Smu Chiteri).

Not only were family separations and loss a source of constant worry and grief, but not having relatives in the extended family network nearby limited the family's coping resources while in Ingushetia.

I've got no father. If I had, it would be easier for me. We're alone with mum. We haven't even got relatives. (female, 13 years, Burploshadka)

Discussions on the issue of family separations with a mixed group of girls and boys ended with the resounding theme that beyond ending the war, having one's relatives "nearby" was a critical component of improving life.

Interviewer: What would you like to happen to improve your life?

Teen 1: That there was no war in Grozny, and that my relatives were near.

Teen 2: I think the same. That all the relatives were near and that there was no war.

Teen 3: If there were houses, if my family was here...I'd be happy.  
(mixed group interview: female, 11 years; male, 15 years; male, 14 years, 000 Bogatyr)

## 6. Time

The issue of time took several main forms in the data. All aspects of time reflected in the data relate strongly to types of stressors facing the Chechen IDPs and obstacles to getting social support in key relationships in their lives. Time was distributed irregularly within the camps, with children at risk of being “idle” while parents were reported to have “no time” to be with their children.

While many young people in the IDP camps held major responsibilities in their families, several adolescents spoke of concerns about being “idle” and “wasting” time while in the settlements. This type of idleness seemed to relate strongly to concerns about continuing schooling and the ability of these youth to prepare themselves for their futures.

Most important for youth? There is nothing for them to do, they sleep all day...If they had something to do... to study...Here, in Sleptsovsk, for me there is nothing useful. If I were at home, it would be better, I would be doing something. But here there is nothing.  
(female youth leader, 18 years, Detsky Sad)

When there was no school, children went, collected bottles...We are glad, that there is a school, that there is studying. (male youth leader, 17 years, Detsky Sad)

Well, here we stay at home all day long, in those garages we're living in, in the rooms. Before, when mum sold things at the market, we went to see her, walked a bit. We went to help her, returned home. And then they put up this school. Now we're going to attend this school. (female, 16 years, Smu Chiteri)

One young man spoke of the chance to study as an antidote to negative behaviors:

It is important for them [the children] to study, not to just walk around. So that they would not have time to smoke or do something bad.  
(male youth leader, 16 years, Canning Factory)

To help out in their families and cope with the idleness, some young boys expressed a strong interest in “working” or “getting a job”. When asked what was most important to them right now, many boys spoke about working almost as frequently as their desire to continue their studies. One interviewee described how the role of working, of “being busy with something”, motivated his desire to find a job.

Teen: Well, for me, the most important is to have an opportunity to work.

Interviewer: You'd have time enough for both working and studying...You wouldn't get tired?

Teen: Well, even if I get tired, one still has to be busy with something...It's not a problem [laughs].

Interviewer: Would you find time for it?

Teen: With Allah's help, I would. (male, 13 years, Butter Dairy)

As this young man later explained: “Two or three days ago I found a job in a gas-filling station.” When asked if he was paid for this work, he answered: “Sometimes they do, sometimes they don’t...The money that they give, it’s so little.” For this young man, what seemed to matter most was the fact of being “busy with something.”

In order to meet the survival needs of the family, many IDP Chechen parents are forced to spend a great deal of time away from their children in search of work or humanitarian distributions. As participants described, parents are constantly balancing attempts to find work, the humiliation of not being able to make ends meet, and exhaustion, along with efforts to spend time with their children. In this manner, the social, economic and physical conditions of living in the settlements are entangled.

It's hard to think that mum's always going to the station, well, she doesn't work, and yet, she's always on the run. Dad's at home, he hasn't got a job. He's 50 years old and he cannot do any hard job. There's no job at all for the Chechens in Ingushetia.  
(female, 14 years, 000 Bogatyr)

Everybody’s busy with something. Almost everybody’s at the market, trying to earn a living to provide one’s family and children with food. (Pause) Besides, there’re the sick, who also need to be looked after. (female, 12 years, Smu Chiteri)

Interviewer: Can parents or other residents of the camp spend time with their children?

Teen: No, they can’t. My parents, for example, cannot do that because they go to collect humanitarian aid...but it’s rare that they succeed in it. My parents go there, they come back tired...they have no time. (female, 16 years, Smu Chiteri)

As described by several participants, multifaceted time demands plagued all adults in the camp, but women in particular. These concerns are expressed in two mixed- group interviews of adolescents in the Logovaz settlement.

Interviewer: Do parents have the possibility to spend time with you? What do they do? Maybe they help you with homework? Or, maybe they play with you?

Teen 1: They spend all their time at the bazaar.

Teen 2: Yes.

Teen 1: Because of the bazaar they do not have time.

Interviewer: All of them, do they?

Teen 2: Mom even more so.

Teen 1: They would go to the bazaar...then they would run back to look around the home and then again to the bazaar. In short, the time passes.

(Teen 1: male, 17 years; Teen 2: female 16 years, Logovaz)

Interviewer: Can parents or other residents of this camp spend their time with children?

Teen 1: They can’t—they’re always busy, either on the market or with work.

Teen 2: Many of them work. It’s rare that they’re at home.

Interviewer: They get tired? They don’t have time enough?

Teen 2: They get tired. They return from the market tired. It’s hard, yet, we make ends meet somehow. (Teen 1: male, 13 years; Teen 2: male 14 years, Logovaz)



Quite often, parents were described as going to extraordinary lengths to try and cope with many roles. Women in particular bore the responsibility of caring for sick and elderly members of the family, both in the displacement settlements and back in Chechnya. Given tight security at the Ingushetia/Chechnya border, adult women were more likely to be allowed passage and often shuttled food and medicine to family members back home. As some teens reported, their mothers' time with them was frequently interrupted by trips across the border. This young girl spoke of how her mother had to interrupt her home schooling to tend to her ailing grandmother.

My mum gave me lessons, so that I studied...at home. Because we didn't have a school here. Sometimes she did. It was not always that she had time to, she goes home often. Her mother's ill and now she's also gone there, to her [to Chechnya], to take her there to the hospital. (female, 13 years, 000 Bogatyr)

The role of time in the larger social ecology of life in the Chechen IDP settlements had relevance for the emerging identity and sense of self among the Chechen youth. Many young people expressed an awareness of the ways in which their lives had been interrupted compared to youth who had not experienced war. In terms of education, many described the months since the most recent fighting began as a "*lost year*" when there were few opportunities for them to learn.

Since we came here, a whole year has passed. We have lost it. And now we are losing another year. I should have been able to graduate from school, but now I am in the 9th grade...All children have lagged behind now. (male, 11 years, Finotdel)

I also need good education, because I have already missed one year, and if I miss one more I will not be able to sit with kids to [pass the exams].  
(male, 13 years, Canning Factory)

This terrible awareness of being "behind" was all the more striking in light of the fact that for many adolescents, this is a second period of disruption following the massive displacement that occurred during the 1994-1996 Chechen conflict.

In addition to creating "lost time", the war was also portrayed as causing young people to "grow up fast". Some adolescents described this phenomenon in terms of the adult-like coping style that many Chechen children display in response to the extreme stressors of war.

Now the war makes them adults right from the age of 6, now even kids understand that if there is a whistle, it is necessary to hide in a shelter. All our kids know that it is necessary to hide. If there is noise it means that they bomb us. They made us all adults - we don't have kids here, in fact. (female, 18 years, Canning Factory)

Well, I think, it depends also on psychology. Some children get grown-up too early, what else can I say? Certainly, because of this war many children have grown up fast. And though they look like children, if you talk to them, their ideas are very much adult-like, and sometimes you are simply lost and cannot understand who is standing before you: the child or adult? (female youth leader, 17 years, Financial Department)

Like the particular burdens carried by mothers, the economic needs of parents often resulted in family roles being shifted to younger members of the family. As a result, young girls often

carried central responsibilities for childcare, cooking and cleaning in the household. For many girls, a conflict arose between their desire to pursue an education and the constraints posed by familial responsibilities. Obstacles for girls to pursue education were not unique to the displacement. One young woman explained that her familial responsibilities and the family's economic strain had kept her from school even before the current displacement.

Teen: Younger children went to school, parents went to work, and I stayed at home alone. I had to clean the courtyard, prepare a meal before they return, then wash dishes...I had to do everything. That's why they didn't let me carry on with studies. Before the war began, I wanted to enter some [academic] institution but mum didn't allow me, she said we had no money. I wanted to, but they didn't let me do that.

Interviewer: And how much money was required?

Teen: 600 [rubles] for three months. It was rare that mum was paid her salary; and we only had enough money for food. And dad brought [home] money very rarely. And now, we don't have even that. They don't work anywhere, they stay in that room [in the IDP camp]. There's no work now. (female, 18 years, Smu Chiteri)

Family responsibilities, particularly for girls, also presented barriers for young people to participate in the IRC education program in the IDP camps. As an interview with a 13-year-old female indicated, the "choice" to pursue studies may not have been equally available to both girls and boys:

Well, some children want to go to school very much. For example one girl wants to go to school. Her mother sells [meat] patties here [in the market], and she has no time. She has a young sister, so she has no time to go to school. When I asked her, why she didn't go to school, she told me so.

Interviewer: She must look after her little sister?

Teen: Yes.

Interviewer: Isn't there anybody to take care of her?

Teen: No one, the others are younger than she.

Interviewer: Are there many children like that girl?

Teen: Yes, there are many of them. Their parents have no time to run the house, they are busy to get food and boots for their children, so they take care of their younger brothers and sisters. (female youth leader, 13 years, IngAvto)

One young woman who had been particularly critical of the education program revealed later in her interview that the reason she was not attending was rooted in her family obligations.

(sighs). There are a lot of things [that could] make life more acceptable; for example, if I could go to this school more often, to participate in events, I would say that I live. But I must take care of home, we call it our home. There are a lot of us.. it is necessary to cook and it is necessary to clean up. I just do not have enough time.

(female, 18 years, Canning Factory)

## **VI. PSYCHOSOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF THE EMERGENCY NONFORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAM**

### **A. Access to Education and Hopes for the Future**

An evident benefit of the IRC intervention in this population was its responsiveness to concerns expressed by adolescents about continuing their studies. When asked about their hopes for the future, many youth expressed a desire for the war to end and the chance to return to a “normal” life. Although many youth spoke of their current circumstances as “abnormal”, their descriptions of their vision for a “normal” life in the future involved the chance to pursue one’s education and thus earn a decent living, support a family, and live in a more secure environment. In this vision, education was often portrayed as a critical pathway to the success of both individuals and society as a whole.

Hopes? (Pause) I hope that all this will end soon. There is no end without the beginning. Everything will be all right. I’d like that we live like everybody, that our people have good jobs, that Chechen people become intelligent and educated.. That we have a good republic, without armed robbers, a normal president, a good government, a code...In general, I want everything to be good, that there is a constitution and a law, that we don’t have war. (male youth leader, 16 years, Gazi Yurt)

That I could live normal life...without troubles in life...Actually that the war is over, this is first. That I return home...that my sister, my brother live well through their lives...I think, that a big school is necessary here, that all who want may to go to school. I mean not only those who live in our camp, but also Chechens who live in other places. That the library had literature. That everyone could study well. (male, 13 years, Canning Factory)

### **B. Education as an Antidote to Humiliation and Stigma**

In the face of frequent experiences of humiliation, several youth discussed the opportunity for young Chechens to become educated as a means of proving their decency to others. One young man linked the potential for Chechen children to become “educated” and “cultured” as an antidote to what he described as the “label” or stigma imposed upon Chechens by most of Russia:

I want the Chechen youth to be educated, cultured, I want them to enter any university in Russia, and to wash off the spot or label, which Russia has fixed on us. (male youth leader, 16 years, Canning Factory)

### **C. Enriching Social Supports to Youth**

In general, many youth and families were enthusiastic about the opening of an IRC education program in their settlement. In the collision of demands on parent’s time, the education program was viewed as providing some relief.

[Parents] have no time to help us. Because they should stay in line for humanitarian aid, you see there [are] no jobs here. They have work to do...There is no time. But they are

glad that they have opened this school, that there are the teachers, leaders. They are very glad. (male youth leader, 16 years, Gazi Yurt)

Although the education program's goal was to encourage parent and community involvement, demands on time inhibited the participation of many parents. The following exchange occurred when a young man was asked if he thought parents were able to participate in the IRC's education program.

[Parents] do not participate. Why? Honestly, they have a lot of problems. The winter is coming, it is necessary to build houses...children have to be dressed, it is necessary to earn money...In short, they haven't time...What can I say? When children go to school, the parents worry about them...And the time passes. They let them go to school...to learn...children are engaged in there. In short, they have no time to come to school, because it is necessary to earn money to buy food. And the mothers have no time at all, because it is necessary both to wash, and to prepare meals...If there are hens, it is necessary to look after them, if there are cows, to look after the cows...The women in general don't have time. So the women work. They don't take rest at all.  
(male youth leader, 17 years, Burploshadka)

#### **D. A Space and Place for Young People**

For many young people, finding a means to enjoy the company of fellow teenagers had been challenging in the emotionally charged context of some settlements. In some sites, before the program started, young people had tried to organize their own activities, but encountered resistance from adults, who were offended by the sight of young people having “fun” amidst the hardship of displacement. The following exchange from an interview with four teenage girls in the Smu Chiteri Settlement describes one such instance:

Interviewer: Have you tried? Have you had an opportunity to organize a club, a project or any other activity [since being in the IDP settlement]?

Teen 1: No, we haven't.

Interviewer: What is the reason? You didn't want to? Or something hampered you?

Teen 2: They don't permit us, well...

Teen 3: We wanted...We tried...to entertain [ourselves] somehow but they didn't permit us. We wanted to make a party with dancing but they didn't permit that either. A man came, he's from Samashki. It was so good, we gathered, there were no drunken among us, we just wanted to entertain ourselves a little, but then he came...He kicked our tape-recorder with his foot, it was so unpleasant. Then they went to the superintendent [camp leader] to make complaints...He didn't let us have a party. We explained that we wanted a kind of distraction, that nothing bad had happened so far, no matter, they forbade us to, they said it's not good to have fun during the wartime.

(females aged 18, 16, and 13 years, Smu Chiteri)

The creation of a safe place to go and an emotional space for young people to develop enriched social supports is central to the research question of whether the emergency education program helps to enrich the emotional environment for young people in the settlement. It was evident that, by the time of their arrival in the settlements, many young people had lost their homes and any sense of a “place” to return to.

Some people have no place to go. Our house was burned, the apartment was burned...I do not know where we should go now. (male, 11 years, Financial Department)

When asked about what was most important to young people at present, many spoke of the importance of having a place to anchor themselves to during this transition

To obtain a place where it is possible to live. I think, many people lost their homes and now wander from place to place living in other peoples' flats, no place to live. I want to find such place for them. Probably they also need education, to improve their life. (male, 13 years, Canning Factory)

The data indicated that Chechen youth saw the education program as “helping” by returning young people to their studies as well as giving children a safe and reliable place to go and an emotional space to turn their thoughts towards more age-appropriate concerns.

I like that children are taken away from the war. They study...they play and they enjoy themselves. (female youth leader, 13 years, IngAvto)

We go to this school which has been organized here for us. Perhaps this school helps us (pause) not to degrade [lose what we once knew] and what is more this school occupies our minds, the children's minds...We don't forget of course that there is war there in Chechnya, at home, but at the same time it gives us a chance to divert our thoughts from it. This school helps us. (female youth leader, 12 years, IngAvto)

Not only did teens feel that young people needed a place to “forget about the war;” they also needed a place to find “understanding”.

For young people...at my camp more communication and understanding is necessary, you know...kids especially need understanding, because now they are...harassed. (female, 18 years, Canning Factory)

Relationships with teachers, youth leaders, and peers in the education program were all discussed as a potential source of assistance and support when parental time was unavailable. The provision of enriched opportunities for social support was a central mechanism by which the IRC education program aimed to address the psychosocial needs of beneficiaries. Indeed, the education program was seen as providing a mechanism for children to meet new people and develop friendships.

Interviewer: what would you like to have in the school that is opening now?

Teen: To study well, to meet new people, to have more friends. (female, 11 years, 000 Bogatyr)

As usual, studies are first...To study, to create such clubs for youth, so that it will become more cheerful...Anyway, in the company of friends it is possible to speak from your heart. (female youth leader, 19 years, FinOtdel).

## **E. Adaptive Education Strategies vs. the Desire to Be “Normal”**

The most striking instance of incongruity between the hope and expectations of Chechen youth in the settlements and the benefits provided by the emergency education program related to the nature of the program model itself. As has been discussed, humiliation and the desire to be “normal” were important forces shaping the experience of Chechen IDP adolescents in these settlements. But while the education program offered both learning and opportunities for improving supports, it also created strain due to its non-formal nature in a system highly regulated by documentation and credentialing.

As is commonly the process in emergency education programs, the schools in the camp had reinitiated learning activities for children as quickly as possible as a first line of defense given the massive numbers of out-of-school children. The IRC emergency education schools used certain strategies in order to begin an immediate return to structure and non-formal learning, and to make the education program less threatening to out-of-school children. Due to a shortage of teachers trained in multiple subjects, the schools encouraged Chechen teachers to teach whatever they could at first as a means of immediately restoring learning activities. As a result, not all subjects could be taught and many classrooms were of mixed ages and grade levels.

Some of these strategies worked. In order to be non-threatening and supportive of children who were potentially traumatized and behind in their studies, the school was designed to be less punitive and rigid than a traditional Russian classroom. As one participant explained, because the school was allowing children to attend by choice and not “force”, it had been able to appeal to more children in the settlements.

Perhaps the most attractive thing for our children is that our school is a free one. It doesn't force you to go to classes and learn. Our children...they can't be forced now, they are not well fed now. And a hungry child can't be forced to learn a poem or something else. But our children like studying...At first the children didn't want to go to school. They thought that was the same school as at home, the obligatory one. But they came once, twice and saw that it wasn't like that and they began to go to school on their own. (female youth leader, 12 years, Ingavto )

Other strategies used by the program included placing little emphasis on grades since so many children were behind in their schooling. This spared teens and their parents initial “embarrassment”, but also lessened the value of grades once they were given:

Earlier, we didn't receive [grades]...because, if someone received "2" [unsatisfactory, failed grade], and the one who studies well received "5" [excellent mark], there were disputes, discontent...Now we receive them. And, even if someone performs the homework badly, they try to give him a good mark all the same...This school is not like at home. They do not want to insult them. When they [the children] receive "5", it, is like a holiday for the parents...This school is not a usual school. The marks can be given, even if one knows or does not know the material...performs or does not perform a task...so that the children can study better. [So that] they should not forget what they knew earlier. (male youth leader, 17 years, Bore Hole Site)

Although these strategies were intended to make children feel comfortable and respond to limited human and material resources, they often reinforced the view of the school as “not normal”. In this way, the structure of the education program clashed with many adolescents’ desire for legitimacy and normality. As a result, the adaptive program model was viewed by some adolescents as emblematic of Chechen IDPs living a parallel, yet “abnormal” or unnatural existence.

With the school? I would like to receive knowledge so that I can grow up normally, work. Here in the tent, what kind of knowledge can we get? No knowledge may be obtained there...I would like to study normally. (male, 11 years, Financial Department)

I’d like that we have more classrooms in our school. I think it isn’t correct that all children study together. I think they have to be separated by classes.  
(female youth leader, 16 years, Gazi-Yurt)

If we study in such tents and live in such rooms then we can be equal to animals.  
(female, 18 years, Canning Factory)

Thus, to many teens interviewed, despite the good things that the school offered, it was not a “*normal school*”. Some children had left the IRC school if their parents could afford fees, or in many cases a bribe, to enroll them in local Ingush schools. One young man described how he had been attending an Ingush school once a week.

Teen: On Sundays...we go to school. To school #4, and then we go to this school.

Interviewer: You've left this school here [the IRC emergency education school]?

Teen: No, not yet.

Interviewer: Why are you leaving? You're not happy with this school?

Teen: I'm happy here, [but] they don't have all the lessons..That school is not normal.

(male, 13 years, Logovaz)

With the emphasis placed on high-quality education, receiving graduation certificates for grade completion was not a trivial issue to many Chechen families. These documents are critical for moving ahead in the Russian education system both in Ingushetia and upon return to Chechnya. Thus, the need for documents, credentialing and completion certificates weighed heavily on many students and families.

Interviewer: What do you expect to get from the educational program that is starting in your camp?

Teen: I'd like to get an appropriate document, so that I could continue studies in the future. (female, 13 years, 000 Bogatyr)

We have the IRC schools here, but this is not an official school, and that's why kids do not visit it very often: one day in school two days at home...if it were a compulsory program, they could have attended it, we would have known that some certificates would be issued or some papers...they do not accept you anywhere without official papers. Well, knowledge—this is good. But it would have been great, if it was officially formalized. If some document was issued on graduation. I would like to get any official document very much, and I would surely attend the school.

(female, 18 years, Canning Factory)

This desire for school documents as a means of gaining legitimacy left many youth and families in a bind as a result of the limited opportunities available for youth to participate in mainstream schools. Not all families could afford the means of educating their children in local schools. The contrast between the hopes and expectations adolescents held and the nature of the options available to them at the time of this data collection presented a dilemma for the emergency education program: adolescents are craving normality, but for any intervention to be delivered, it had to begin first with creative and adaptive strategies that were by no means a complete replacement for formal, mainstream education.

## **F. Hope for the Future**

Despite its shortcomings, the creative structure of the IRC emergency education program did offer one of the only opportunities for many youth to return to their studies. Overall, the mere fact that an emergency education program had been started at their site offered them a place of acceptance and invigorated a sense of hope.

Before they opened a school here, we went to the local school to study. They didn't accept us, they said there were no places because we are Chechens. That's it. And when they opened that school we were glad. And children were glad too when they were told a school's going to be here. We are going to study here, to attend classes.  
(female, 18 years, Canning factory)

When asked about their hopes in general, teenagers spoke of their own desire and that of their parents to see the next generation overcome the ravages of war and have opportunities to be productive and successful in the future. Some young people spoke of their generation as agents for change in Chechnya. Once again, opportunities for education were discussed as central to improving leadership in the next generation.

I think they [the young people] expect that they will grow up and change what's happening to Chechnya now. Maybe they would grow up and become good people. They hope that they would become good scientists, because, in fact, we do not have either professors or scientists here, because our professors were killed all like pigeons.  
(female, 18 years, Canning Factory)

Many spoke about the opportunity to study in any form as a means of improving the potential for peace and success within their generation and for Chechnya as a whole.

I want the war to be over and all of us to go home, I want children and youth to study, I want Chechnya to be in peace. That's what I hope for.  
(female youth leader, 18 years, Canning Factory)

Children are probably the future, I think so. And consequently, if this future is better educated, it will also be better to live in Grozny...the people will live better...if the children are uneducated, undisciplined, there will be no future in Grozny.  
(female, 11 years, Canning Factory )



Some of the most compelling evidence for the beneficial effects of the emergency education program on young people's lives during displacement was embodied in the experiences of youth leaders in the program. For these teens, the chance to participate in leadership roles in the emergency education program was described as improving self-confidence as well as their abilities to help others. Several youth leaders explained that the experience had changed how they interacted with other young people as well as how they thought about their own futures.

I have to have much patience here (laughs). What can I say? Children...to do what they ask me, to help...When I return home [to Chechnya], if I go to anybody, I do not want to have any quarrels...This is the benefit for me—patience.  
(male youth leader, 17 years, Burploshadka )

Interviewer: Did you get anything out of your participation in the non-formal education program?

Teen: A lot. In particular, from the communication with children...I learned not to be shy, I can communicate with children. I could be a good teacher. Before I was too shy, I didn't answer in class, only listened. Now I can do social work...I learned a lot of good things. (female youth leader, 16 years, Gazi Yurt)

As one youth leader described, her involvement in the IRC program has meant that her time during displacement had not been entirely "lost". Her experiences had offered her important self-knowledge to consider she wants to do in her future.

I don't think that I've lost this year. I studied at school, helped children, and I think that it will help me in the future...I think that I found a common language with children. I could work as a kindergarten teacher. (female youth leader, 15 years, Canning Factory)

## **VII. STUDY LIMITATIONS**

The findings of this study must be considered in light of several study limitations. First of all, given that all interviews were collected by third party local research assistants, issues of bias in the interview relationship must be considered. Given that Chechen research assistants carried out all the interviews presented in this analysis, it is important to note that their individual styles and the fact that they were from the same culture and experience of displacement may have influenced responses given by those interviewed. The research staff received close supervision in the field from the Education Program Officer who held routine "debriefing" sessions with the research team to allow discussion of issues such as recognizing bias and thus containing its influence. Nonetheless, interpersonal interviewer biases cannot be totally controlled and must be taken into consideration in the findings. In some cases, such biases can actually be seen as providing an additional source of data. For instance, in review of the transcripts, it became evident that one of the research assistants had a great propensity to ask leading questions despite the training he had received and our ongoing efforts to provide debriefing and guidance to all the RA's while they were actively collecting data. However, the nature of the questions that he emphasized highlighted a concern many young men had about feeling harassed or persecuted as Chechens while living among the Ingush people. Upon review of data from several interviewers, it became evident that this was an issue that caused a great deal of subjective distress for the Chechen IDP youth, particularly young men. By taking a cue from the strong reactions of the

research staff to issue, the study was better able to reveal a stressor of great importance to the research questions at hand.

Another potential source of bias in this work was the degree of error introduced both in the transcription process and in the translation of the original transcripts from Russian to English. In order to address this concern, all quotes used in this analysis were reviewed by a second native Russian speaker. Any sections of data that remained unclear or potentially misleading were dropped from the analysis. A final limitation of the findings concerns the fact that all the data presented in this analysis were collected in single interviews. It is quite plausible that, had follow-up interviews been possible, the nature of the data would have allowed further depth in our understanding of the experiences of these adolescents. The IRC is planning follow-up data collection within the spontaneous settlements in the fall of 2002. The results of this data collection will certainly further our understanding of the dynamics of persistent concerns and sources of support available to young people throughout the ongoing displacement.

## **VIII. DISCUSSION**

Initial impressions from these interviews indicated that Chechen IDP adolescents are grappling with a variety of stressors during displacement. These took both physical and emotional forms, from poor living conditions, to worries about family members back home, to struggles with a constant sense of humiliation or being out of place. Themes of humiliation and the desire for normality were especially noteworthy. In the face of multiple stressors, young people identified that several things were of great to importance in helping them cope with their current situation. For the young people interviewed, education was of great concern and a critical means of achieving future success and even communal peace. The IRC education program played an important role in the social ecology of the settlements by offering children a place to go and engage in age-appropriate activities, to develop new friendships and gain social support, to reduce idleness and invigorate a renewed sense of hope for the future. Although no direct links can be made between these mechanisms and children's mental health, these elements are all theoretically important to the social and emotional development of adolescents.

Nonetheless, the IRC schools must overcome some obstacles also intrinsic to the ongoing development of its young beneficiaries. First of all, creative strategies taken to get the program running immediately clashed with adolescent concerns about living "like other kids" and attending "normal" schools. Second, the limited ability of the IRC's nonformal education program to provide grades, national testing and formal grade completion certificates authorized by the Russian Ministry of Education clashed with the expectations of teens and parents to secure documentation to move ahead in the educational system, and thus ensure a better future.

Given the concerns expressed by adolescents in the process of this research and ongoing program monitoring, the IRC schools worked vigorously with the Ministry of Education to clarify standards for equivalency. As of the summer of 2002, the IRC schools had improved their deployment of teachers so that more appropriate grade levels and better-designed blended classrooms were in place. Children in the IRC emergency education program now sit regularly for National exams and also earn grade completion certificates recognized by the Russian

Ministry of Education. In light of the importance placed on education, concerns about missed years of schooling and the consequent low literacy observed during this research were identified as serious threats to youth well-being and psychosocial adjustment. The IRC is currently providing catch-up programs for adolescents whose learning has been interrupted throughout Chechnya's protracted conflict.

Given the nature of working in humanitarian emergencies, IRC education programs will always be faced with balancing the necessity of beginning non-formal education in some settings to meet the immediate needs and educational rights of children, while recognizing their hunger for legitimacy. Part of the important work of the IRC education program will be to collaborate with local authorities, including at the political level, to influence policies that may allow the Chechen IDPs to participate in formal education more rapidly.

Other particularly striking findings of the research were descriptions of frequent humiliation and the ongoing tension existing between the IDPs and the Ingush host community. Humiliation and marginalization have been documented as common to the experience of displacement in populations from the homeless to refugees (Fullilove, 1996). In many cases, hatred is at the root of the conflict or persecution that has led to displacement. Fullilove has observed that it is not uncommon for displaced persons to internalize the hatred or humiliation they have experienced. Internalized humiliation and hatred may lead to other negative feelings and behaviors that can destabilize relations between the host and displaced communities (ibid.). To counter the negative influences of marginalization and humiliation, there is great potential in the participatory rebuilding of physical spaces and enrichment of the emotional environment whereby people within the community can better care for one another. As Fullilove has written, "empowered collaboration" is critical for "reestablishing familiarity, repairing attachment to place, and stabilizing place identity". In this light, collaborative activity and participatory interventions, such as this locally-run education program, may be seen as a tool for addressing intergroup hatred by creating a sense of belonging and offering a place where more positive relationships may be nurtured.

This study lends support to previous data suggesting that participatory programs hold great promise for improving interventions serving displaced populations (Fullilove, 1998; Summerfield, 1999). Imposing interventions on displaced populations, particularly mental health interventions that were originally designed for other cultures and settings without participatory development may result in negative outcomes. As Watters (2001) has articulated, when refugees or IDPs are unable to give voice to their priorities in the process of service provision, programming may take the form of "institutional responses" shaped by "stereotypes and the homogenizing of refugees into a single pathological identity" (p. 1710). A focus on trauma and pathology has certainly characterized much of the research and intervention directed at war affected children (Stichick, 2001). Furthermore, programs designed without the input of beneficiaries may neglect important capacities or social resources already at work within the IDP community to care for the emotional needs of others. In the present study, the value of harnessing the capacities of beneficiaries was evident in the way youth leaders described the influence that their participation had on their own personal development. However, the limitations to participatory approaches must also be recognized and weighed in program development. For instance, in this Chechen IDP population, it is apparent that there will

continue to be economic and family responsibilities that restrict parents in these settlements from spending time with their children, let alone from becoming involved in participatory education program activities. Steps might be taken to ensure that opportunities for parent involvement (parent association meetings, participatory cultural or sporting events) are scheduled not to conflict with major mealtimes, holidays or working hours when the local market is in operation.

Just as the education program provided a safe place for children to pursue their learning and gain additional social supports, in the future, it may also offer a forum for building bridges with the Ingush host community. Through collaborative events, the education program might act as a catalyst for community-wide sporting or cultural events where Chechen IDPs and Ingush locals have the opportunity to develop more positive relationships. In this spirit, the IRC launched a cultural center in 2001 where exchange between the IDPs and host community is fostered. Such creative approaches to addressing marginalization and social stressors in the lives of the IDP youth have the potential to go a long way in improving their psychosocial well-being and inter-group relations.

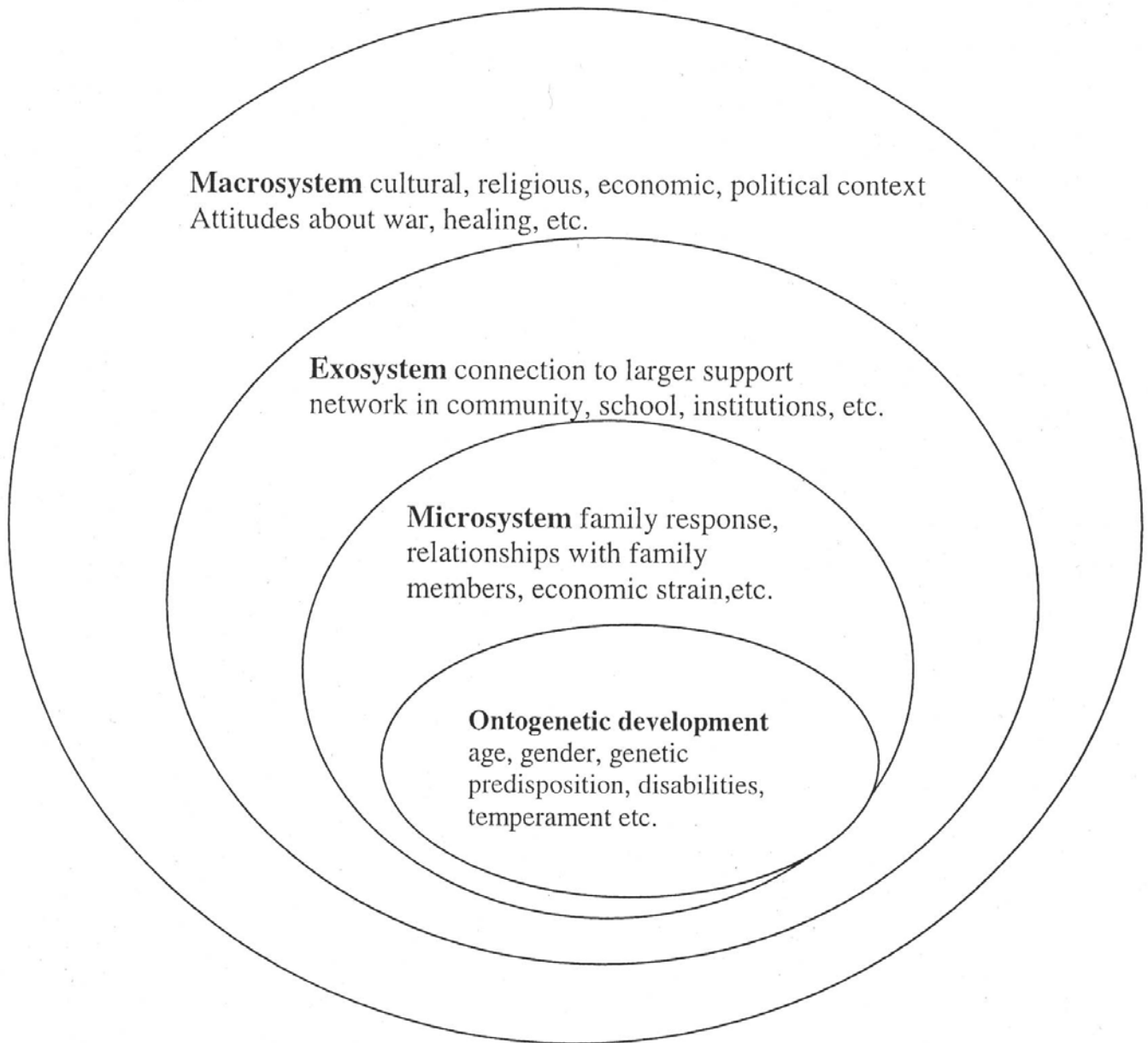
Finally, the data presented here indicate the importance of rethinking how mental health or psychosocial interventions are defined in emergency settings. As Summerfield (1999) has noted, when asked what interventions would help the most in their situation, refugees are more likely to cite social and economic problems rather than psychological ones. Such a finding was also observed in these data. Infrequent discussion of mental health intervention might be the result of stigma or lack of knowledge about mental health problems and their treatment. It may also be the consequence of narrow definitions about what are considered truly “psychosocial” or mental health interventions in emergency environments. Few people could dispute the psychosocial importance of restoring hope for the future, enriching social support networks, providing positive roles for youth and increasing opportunities for meaningful, collective activity. These aspects of emergency education interventions, however, are not routinely discussed in terms of “mental health”.

In addition, this study provides evidence for the need to broaden our definitions of mental health interventions in terms of program planning, funding, and policy development. Such thinking might encourage innovation in the way mental health issues are addressed in emergency settings. For instance, adapting flexible schedules to address multiple demands facing families might allow more young people both to participate in education and to reestablish a sense of control within an uncertain environment (Flores, 1999). Other creative interventions might aim to address the strains of family responsibilities that fall disproportionately on female adolescents. One such response might include the development of collective childcare programs where families can combine and reciprocate child care, thus freeing up more time for other activities, including the opportunity for adolescents charged with watching younger siblings to attend school. The schools could also provide a forum where problems and feelings are discussed openly and confidentially via peer support groups. While support or discussion groups would be valuable for all refugee youth, this type of activity seems particularly important for young women. Establishing such responses would help address the concerns expressed by adolescents in these interviews about having a “place” and “space” to be themselves and be “understood” by others. Furthermore, because children are monitored in a more centralized manner when they

attend school, regular screenings for mental and physical health problems can be made routine to identify children needing a higher level of professional medical or psychiatric care.

This study provides evidence that that a locally-run emergency education program had an important role in enriching the support networks that care for children in the IDP settlements. As Summerfield (2000) has asserted, participatory programs that aim to strengthen the “social fabric” can go a long way in bolstering the “psychological resilience” of populations affected by humanitarian emergencies. Such resilience is evident in the voices of the young people interviewed. However, education programs are not a panacea for the needs and rights of children in emergencies (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). Further efforts to develop the program’s capacity for credentialing and recognition by the formal educational system will remain critical to ensuring educational opportunities for the young Chechen IDPs. The program's capacity to adopt innovative approaches and balance psychosocial and educational goals is critical, and can serve as an important protective activity and a means of ensuring the future security of this population of war-affected youth.

Figure 1: The Social Ecology of Mental Health and Social Support for War-Affected Children



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