Trauma informed work with refugees and asylum seekers
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December 2012

UNHCR, 2004

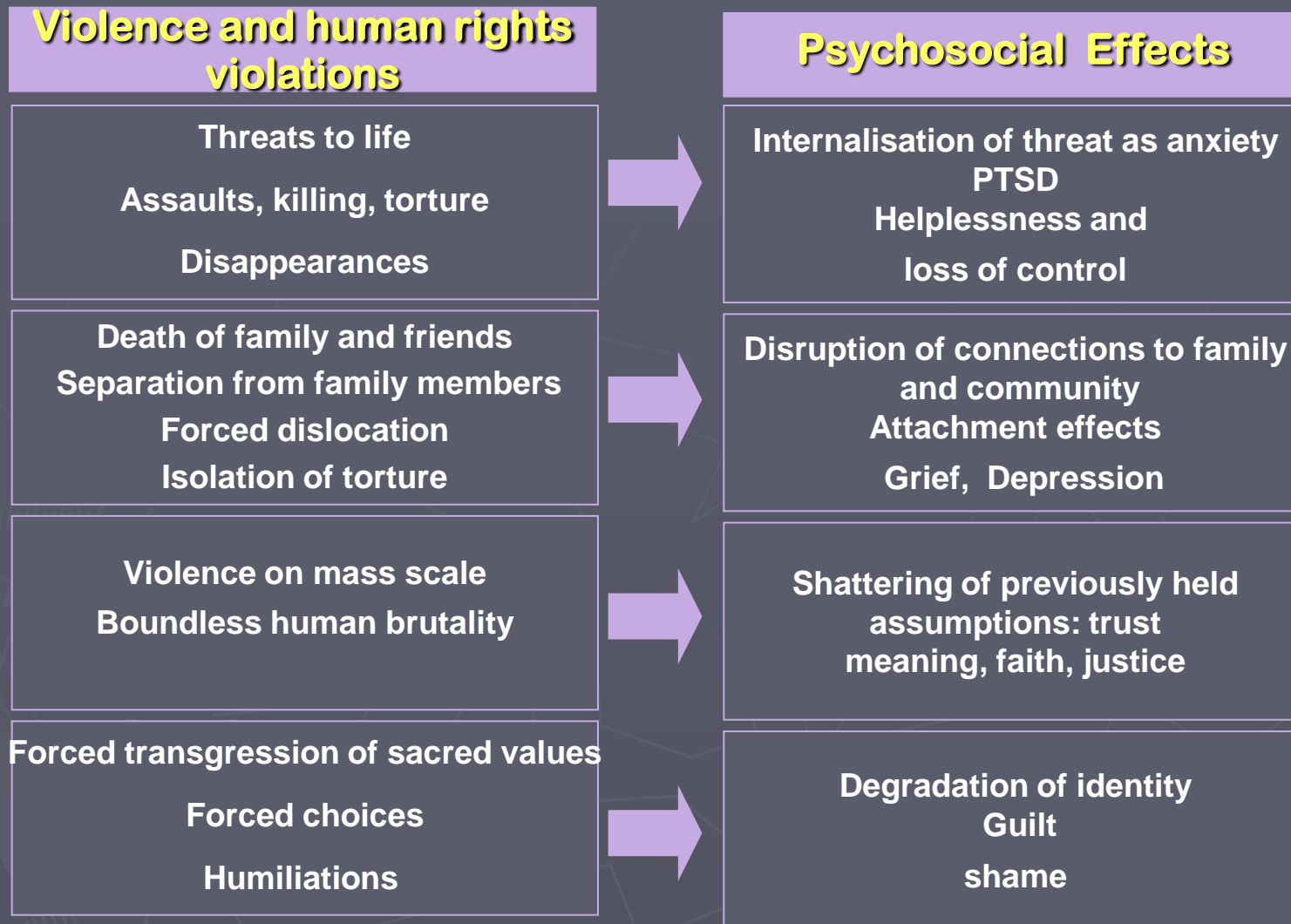Uganda, UNHCR 2004

Top Ten Countries of Birth

Rank	2005	2011
1	Sudan	Afghanistan
2	Iraq	Iraq
3	Afghanistan	Iran
4	Liberia	Burma
5	Sierra Leone	Bhutan
6	Kenya	Sri Lanka
7	Burundi	Thailand
8	Iran	Nepal
9	Egypt, Arab Republic of	Pakistan
10	Tanzania	Ethiopia

Data extracted on 4 January 2012, DIAC Database

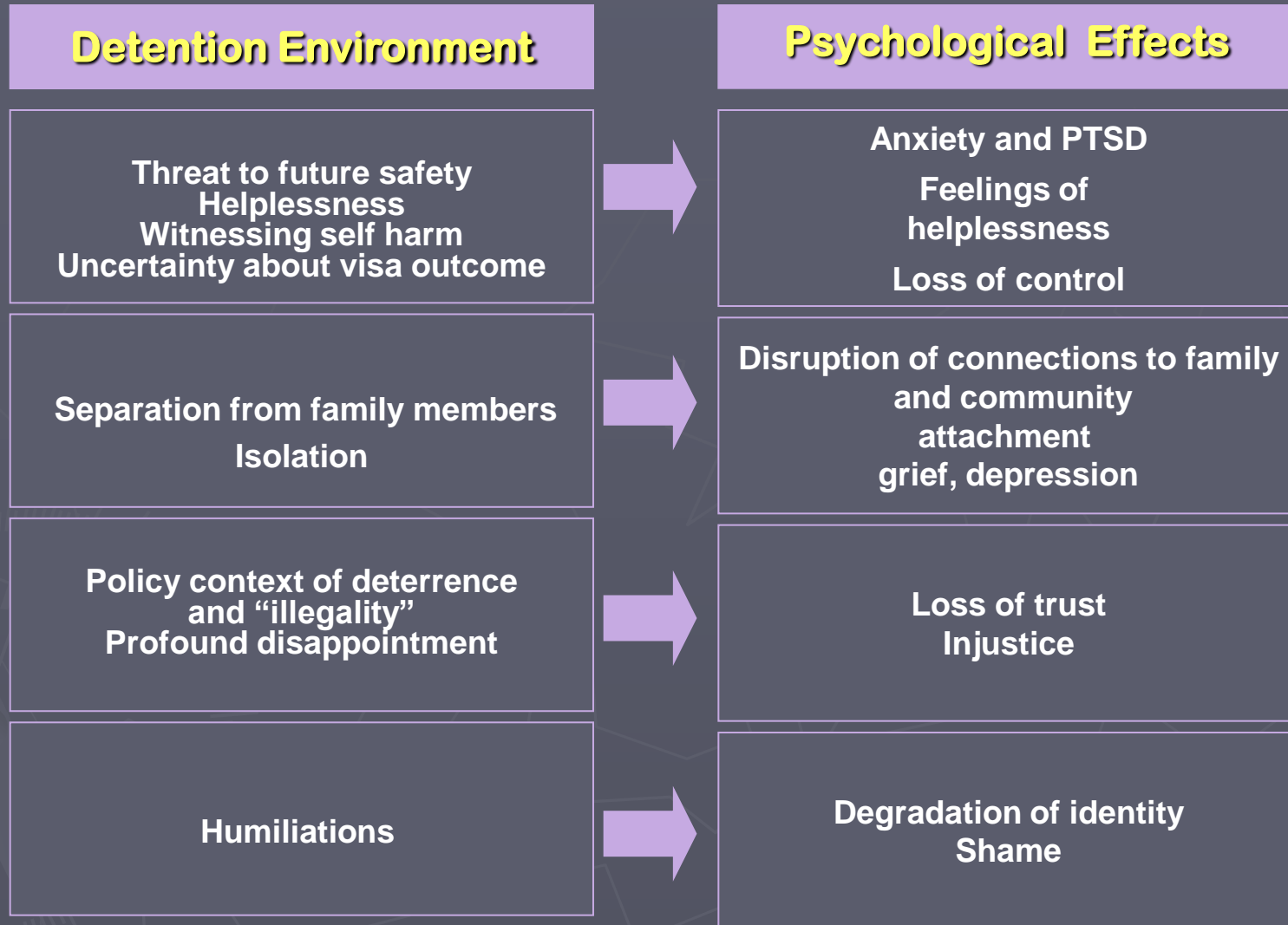History of violence and persecution

Developmental perspective

Contextual factors in Australia
settlement
seeking asylum

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Violence and human rights violations	Psychosocial Effects
Threats to life **Assaults, killing, torture** **Disappearances**	**Internalisation of threat as anxiety** **PTSD** **Helplessness and** **loss of control**
Death of family and friends **Separation from family members** **Forced dislocation** **Isolation of torture**	**Disruption of connections to family** **and community** **Attachment effects** **Grief, Depression**
Violence on mass scale **Boundless human brutality**	**Shattering of previously held** **assumptions: trust** **meaning, faith, justice**
Forced transgression of sacred values **Forced choices** **Humiliations**	**Degradation of identity** **Guilt** **shame**

Detention: re-traumatisation

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Detention Environment	**Psychological Effects**
Threat to future safety Helplessness Witnessing self harm Uncertainty about visa outcome	Anxiety and PTSD Feelings of helplessness Loss of control
Separation from family members Isolation	Disruption of connections to family and community attachment grief, depression
Policy context of deterrence and "illegality" Profound disappointment	Loss of trust Injustice
Humiliations	Degradation of identity Shame

Culture

► Family centred

► Values and roles : gender relations, relationship to stranger, collectivism and individualism

► Conflict between traditional values and those of dominant culture

► Stereotyping and biases

► Explanatory models of mental illness, religious faith

Presenting problems

Psychological

► Anxiety, PTSD, dissociation, conversion symptoms

► Grief and depression – numbing, protest, anger

► Complex PTSD, affect regulation, disturbances of self

Social

► Family conflict, intergenerational conflict

► Interpersonal difficulties – attachment, idealisation and devaluation

Cognitive

► Learning difficulties, severe concentration and memory problems

Physical

► Injuries, nutritional deficiencies, infectious diseases

Principles of Intervention

► Restoring control and reducing anxiety

   Information provision, achievable goal

   setting

► Building connections

   Family, community

► Strengthening core beliefs

   Trust, justice, meaning

► Restoring dignity and reducing shame and guilt

Trauma informed interventions: recognition, relationship, speciallist trauma focus

Recognition? acknowledgement, noticing, enquiring

"what converts the unbearable experience into a bearable one seems to be a full recognition of one's experience by oneself and by others – the affective justice of having one's story truly and deeply understood…here too, the quality of public or cultural acknowledgement matters"

p289-290 Hoffman

Where hardship is widely shared and understood, pain can be reduced

Relationship ? attunement, empathy, genuine interest, internalisation of good relationship leading to trust, sense of self

Speciallist trauma focus – multiple theories and approaches

Exploring values

► A parent who feels they have not protected their child

► Failed enactment when witnessing

► Betraying a value such as "violence is wrong"

► Betraying a core self-perception (being stupid rather than competent)

► Cultural, community and family values very important because they define whether transgression is experienced (therefore history provides insight into what the values may be)

► If betrayed value is not having protected children, the opportunity to protect surviving children in settlement country can be curative (no counselling here at all)

► If you have betrayed colleagues, remaining an activist is critical

Interventions: multiple levels

► Individual, family and group – multidisciplinary, counsellor/advocate, natural therapies, mental health clinic

► Community capacity building in collaboration with mainstream services

► Sector capacity building: primary health, education, mental health

► Peak body representation, state and commonwealth depts., dialogue

► Research and policy program area, inquiries, commissioned reports

Interventions : Evidence base

► Most reviews indicate improvement on PTSD symptoms and depressive symptoms

► Studies difficult to compare : differences in target population, differences in interventions, limitations of outcome measures

► Importance of capturing coping with symptoms, daily functioning

► Importance of capturing dignity and recognition, control, sense of justice and other core beliefs

► Capturing trust, connections, belonging in family

A Sudanese young man speaks about his personal beliefs

What has actually influenced my personal beliefs is the war that has been there in the Sudan for the last two decades and it is not really very easy for a person to leave either of their parents at a young age, go alone in the wilderness, go to have pure hardship, a lot of problems, hunger, diseases without medical care, just seeing people dying

…..through all this process in the wilderness I just came to take life as simple as it is and I know life is a struggle all the time. If you are alive you struggle. By struggling you can get what you want .

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.........continuing

So having that determination has actually made me who I am today. I haven't yet got anything I want , but I am still struggling. I don't give up, because if we are not dead, it is still a healthy struggle. It is how I learned to value life and that is how I even see it, so there is nothing hard if you really want it

So struggle is the slogan that I really have

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Resources

► **www.foundationhouse.org.au**

► AUSTRALIAN GUIDELINES FOR THE TREATMENT OF ADULTS WITH Acute Stress Disorder and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health (2007)