

Evaluation of an Expressive Art as Therapy Program Undertaken in Sāmoa

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Abstract

This summative evaluation study was undertaken to ascertain the outcomes and long-term impact of an expressive arts therapeutic intervention in Sāmoa, as well as provide an improved template for future use. Following a devastating tsunami in 2009, a therapy programme outlined in an earlier report (Latai and McDonald 2016,) was implemented to assist the children to cope with the trauma of death and destruction. In this second report, face to face semi-structured individual and focus interviews were used with 8 students and 6 teachers who were part of the programme the purpose being to gain insight into the long-term impact of the intervention via their perception' and recollections. Their stories and experiences were elaborated upon during these interviews and a thematic analysis approach was used to analyse the data. Although years had passed, the findings indicated that the intervention was still regarded favourably and memories were present of an internalised healing via sharing experience. Notable themes included the value of the sharing, emotional release, creation of meaning, stories, future preparation, use of outputs as records of the event and the cathartic experience of using the expressive arts media. Some teacher perceptions were also reported. Several suggestions were provided for improvement of the programme and the limitations and future research directions are outlined. It is concluded that these findings add to the local and international literature about the value and impact of expressive arts interventions to assist with coping of trauma.

Keywords: expressive arts, therapy, trauma, tsunami

Introduction

Creative and expressive arts activities have been recognized since the early 19th century for having significant therapeutic value (Malchiodi 2014). Utilizing arts as an additional treatment for psychological/psychiatric treatment started to develop as a new discipline with the formal training of art therapists in the early 1900's. Despite the growing reports and studies of how the arts have been utilized to promote healing in a range of psychological problems, more studies are needed to determine the effectiveness of such interventions in assisting individuals to overcome trauma from events such as natural disasters, abuse, war and violence. In this paper, the Moving on Art Therapy programme of 2009 developed for school students in Sāmoa following a tsunami was evaluated some 7 years later to ascertain the long-term impact.

Literature Review

The use of expressive arts as therapy has existed almost since prehistoric times. In more recent times however, the arts have been used more formally to assist individuals to develop a healthy psychological response. These programmes have been developed for a range of difficulties such as adapting to trauma, war, the experience of being a refugee, imprisonment, grief/loss, abuse, social skills deficits, self-esteem problems, and so on. In the past few years, the use of art-based therapies for facilitating more manageable responses to natural disasters have been developed and considerable literature is developed how these programmes can contribute positively to welfare of individuals. Nevertheless, although many descriptions and reports about these programmes have surfaced, more research is needed particularly concerning programme effectiveness. In this study an evaluation programme study was undertaken to ascertain the impact of an arts therapy programme on individuals who had experienced a devastating tsunami in Sāmoa (Latai and McDonald 2016). It is believed that this summative evaluation will make valuable contributions to understanding the

programme intervention and usefulness and has created a foundation for development of future programmes.

Expressive arts, also known as creative arts, comprises the following disciplines—visual art, creative story writing, bibliotherapy, dance/movement drama, poetry, drama and play (Malchiodi 2014). The following definition captures the essence of it:

[Expressive therapies].....are a form of psychotherapy that uses creative modalities, including visual art making, drama, and dance/movement to improve and inform physical, mental and emotional well-being. Arts therapy works by accessing imagination and creativity, which can generate new models of living, and contribute towards the development of a more integrated sense of self, with increased self-awareness and acceptance (ANZATA 2012).

The arts therapist can use these multi-modes of creative expression and integrate them with traditional psychological therapy to create a unique intervention to assist in the understanding and alleviation of difficulties. Creating opportunities to stimulate the client to express ideas in a non-verbal manner is the essential beginning of the approach to promote healing. For instance, the therapist can ask the client to create a story via drawing, rather than discussing it and this is then followed by an interaction between both therapist and client making meaning and working together to identify a resolution via the subsequent discussion.

Art and creativity has been found to be a significant expressive outlet for children. For example, findings from the art therapy literature clearly indicate that it can help children reconcile emotional conflicts and other psychological problems (Kramer and Gerity 2000). Furthermore, Malchiodi (2005) emphasized the importance of expressive arts therapies that have unique features not found in traditional psychotherapy she believes that creative therapies promote a more rapid self-exploration than verbal expression and the doing, making and creating energizes the client needsto move forward emotionally. Another significant quality centres around the individual's imagination which utilises past and future events to promote a cathartic reflection while others have noted that the creative arts therapies have improved children's verbal and creative thinking, reading comprehension, self-perceptions and intrinsic motivation (Harvey 1989). Expressive arts can also facilitate improved psychosomatic responses (Meyerowitz-Katz and Reddick 2016)—for example, traumatic stress can be alleviated as the arts release the stored memories leading to a healthier somatic response. This process provides a unique healing that can effectively complement traditional psychotherapy (Malchiodi 2014)

A debated issue relates to the nature of the arts interventions, for is it a recognized therapeutic intervention or simply an activity that has value to heal? Despite the argument for the 'primacy of therapeutic intent', experts mostly agree that expressive or creative arts alone have capacity to heal. Malchiodi (2013), who discusses creative art therapies and relates it to a continuum of practice-from 'art as therapy' to 'art therapy', considers that 'art as therapy' is a personification of the art making concept and this creative process is a growth-producing experience as well. It can be likened to mainstream counselling - Roger's (1986) humanistic client-centred approach provides conditions for psychological growth but other counselling approaches are also often important whereby the counsellor takes a leading role and implements action strategies to achieve healing. Likewise, in the expressive arts approach, the creative activity, along with a facilitative role, are important (Malchiodi 2013).

Numerous commentaries and research reports have detailed the use of arts as therapy (and art therapy) in assisting with healing of traumatised children and adults. Indeed, for over 200 years,

Frost (2005) charted how children had coped and had developed in very adverse situations (including the holocaust) by being engaged in activities such as play, work and the creative arts. There are now a growing number of other sources that have provided accounts of how the creative arts can be used purposefully. Carey (2006) for example, provided a comprehensive overview of numerous well-designed programmes that have contributed to the psychological well-being of young people who were exposed to trauma.

In a survey of the research on classroom-based programmes, Beuregrad (2014) outlined the usefulness of expressive arts for those who had experienced either conflict in their country, natural disasters, severe economic disadvantage or refugee turmoil. Throughout the world, and in developed and developing countries, many reports attest to the value of such programme. In a comprehensive school-based intervention in the UK (Cortina and Fazel, 2015), *The Art Room* used group interventions in schools for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It noted that over 10,000 students who proceeded through intervention, showed a significant reduction in emotional and behavioural problems with an almost 90 percent improvement in mood and feelings. In another expressive arts programme in Canada, undertaken by Rousseau, Drapeau, Lacroix, Bglishy and Heusch (2004) behavioral and emotional problems were targeted in refugee youth and this had a beneficial impact upon the self-esteem and symptomatology of immigrant and refugee children from various cultures and backgrounds. A four-week arts therapy programme in a school in Sri Lanka helped children effectively overcome the impact of the widespread 2004 Asian tsunami (Chilcote 2007). In a Polynesian context, Latai and Taavao (2012) and Latai and McDonald (2016) detailed how the school context was used as the centre of the community to develop a programme assisting children in Sāmoa to manage the suffering that followed a tsunami in 2009.

In a number of the studies there is a clear programme adaptation to the culture of the context. For example, in a study undertaken by Fenner, Ryan, Latai and Percival (2017) it was revealed art making was a recovery mechanism and supported enhanced levels of self-awareness, identity and empowerment and enabling youth and young adults in Sāmoa to make an improved social contribution to family and village life. It was centred upon the values and framework of *fa'asāmoa* as was the companion study to this research (Latai and McDonald 2016). Stevenson (2012) discussed the importance of the arts to the Pasifika region and there have been a range of Sāmoan reports (eg. Ryan et al. 2015) about how art and the making of cultural artefacts can assist individuals to promote wellness. These accounts are suggestive of a growing literature on the value of expressive arts for healing, when adapted to the context but additional research is needed.

Although there is a growing literature about expressive arts programmes, an urgent need for more research to identify effective programmes and strategies that have been implemented is needed. There are some difficulties however, for as van Westrhenen and Fritz (2014) noted following an exhaustive survey of the literature, methodological issues have prevented creative or expressive art therapies as being viewed as an equally effective approach to other psychotherapies. This is also acknowledged by Machiodi (2005) who indicated the need for wide ranging research and investigations into the efficacy of the use of arts to heal. As Kaimal and Blank (2015) have discussed, there is an urgency to undertake summative evaluation programmes as a means of promoting development—such evaluations can facilitate further research, obtain participant perspectives and voices for future planning, generate evidence for funding opportunities, assist with integration of strategies and document the lessons learned. Accordingly, this summative evaluation study has been developed to investigate outcome effectiveness and make links to future developments.

In this present study, an evaluation has been undertaken (7 years after the event) to assess the efficacy, value and long-term impact of the 2009 Moving on Art as Therapy Program (refer to Latai & McDonald, 2016 for a description) implemented to help children overcome the trauma associated with a tsunami. In this initial outline and description of the programme, which was reported via a simple exploratory qualitative and quantitative design, it was identified as an effective intervention. In this follow-up impact evaluation, the conclusions of Stuckey and Noble (2010) were used to develop a framework for the research platform. In their commentary, these researchers discussed in a wide-ranging evaluation of studies that expressive arts programmes can significantly improve wellness - but interpretation and findings can be difficult at times to analyse because of the wide variation of programmes and intent. Moreover, they noted many of the studies were observational, had small sample sizes and at best elementary experimental design with no control groups and hence limited in generalisability. On the other hand, it was also outlined that qualitative studies provide very important meaning but future studies could enhance understanding if there was an incorporation of both qualitative and quantitative measure. Furthermore, they urged that future research studies should be undertaken with diverse cultural and socioeconomic groups, and with longer term follow-ups to ascertain the sustainability of interventions. This current evaluation was mindful of these recommendations.

Method

This was a qualitative summative evaluation impact study. It enabled a wider perspective interpretation since it was undertaken years after the intervention—it could provide data on whether there was sustainability of objectives and outcomes, if the resources were adequate, and help with making meaningful assessment of what worked and what didn't. It was considered valuable to gather long-term data on participant internalisation of the programme impact and thereby provide additional information about its value and utility. Impact evaluations, although having some limitations (the main ones being accessing participants and recall) are regarded as a valuable source of data (Gertler et al. 2016) providing evidence of the long-term utility of a programme. The study was undertaken with a sample of the participants (14 volunteers were identified by the school authorities) who were previously involved in the expressive arts therapy programme and additional information concerning responses of outside agencies was incorporated into the findings. Approval to use the schools as research sites was obtained from the Sāmoan Ministry of Education Sports and Culture and subsequently all participants were interviewed at a school except for one interviewed off campus. The table below indicates type of interview, gender and age of participants.

Table1. Interview type, gender, age and participant code of participants

INTERVIEW TYPE	GENDER	AGE	CODE
Individual interview	Male	15 years	15M
Individual interview	Male	17 years	17M
Individual interview	Male	19 years	19M
Focus group students	5 females	18-19 years	FGS
Focus group teachers (Secondary)	4 females 2 males	>30 years	FGT

Each interview lasted between 20–30 minutes, was audio recorded and then transcribed. The two researchers interviewed the participants in English, but Sāmoan language was used when necessary to elaborate or to deal with any uncertainties that arose. In addition, probes following the questions were asked. The students were encouraged to answer the questions but also encouraged to elaborate upon their answers. The following open-ended questions were asked of all participants:

1. Please provide for us your overall feelings and thoughts about the Moving On Art Therapy program that was implemented after the tsunami.
2. Do you think it was a good idea to implement it? Why? What did it accomplish?
3. What were the impacts on you and others?
4. What was the most memorable aspect of the program?
5. Were there any negative outcomes?
6. What should be improved/changes next time?

The survey findings were categorised into themes using a thematic analysis procedure (Miles et al. 2013). A range of procedures were used to ensure trustworthiness and included use of the researchers' academic, research and experiential backgrounds, the knowledge base of the local context and culture, understanding of the programme and use of participants' dialogue. Ethical approval for the evaluation was obtained from the University Research Ethics Committee of the National University of Sāmoa and the anonymity, confidentiality, right of withdrawal and intention to publish conditions were outlined to all participants.

Findings

This evaluation was concerned with the implementation of an expressive arts as therapy programme, the purpose being to assess impact, make planning for any future programmes and inform the literature. A survey of a sample of the participants was undertaken and other indices were also considered which provided additional feedback. Overall, the participants indicated a very

favourable response and appreciated the opportunity to engage. From an analysis of the participants' data, themes were identified and these included: sharing of the event, emotional reactivity and well-being, personal recollections, teacher perceptions, bringing meaning and interpretation during chaos, provision of framework for future calamities, the provision of a historical record and the experience (catharsis) of engaging with the art media. Several suggestions were also provided for improvement of the programme. From an examination of these themes it was apparent that a meta-theme of 'healing with sharing' was evident. Following the implementation, there was also considerable interest generated in the outcomes and this was further evidence of its success—requests for display of outputs (internationally and locally), talks about the programme and potential implementation in other domains, university proposals for research, publication of a book, probable curriculum implementation—all attested to the impact of the expressive arts programme.

A key component of arts therapy is the sharing of ideas and this was undertaken with peers, teachers and community members. This was indeed regarded as one of the highlights by the participants. It provided an opportunity for the expressions and the responses of others to the intervention and became an avenue for therapeutic discussion. Some of the senior students noted that this level of sharing had not occurred before in the community.

.....we didn't share [like this] before this programme... (15M)

The programme helped students to share ideas with family and this sharing had not occurred before (FGT)

One of the key characteristic expressive arts therapies is that the output communications are an alternative to verbal communication, which may be difficult for some children (and particularly so following a disaster)—it can provide an additional enriched perspective. Some of the teachers recognised this as a feature of the intervention as a particularly valid response in the absence of words.

Some had an incapacity to express verbally but able to express via pictures.....it was a record for them (FGT)

Writing enabled expression their feeling and ideas (FGT)

Images were real, realistic, emotional like fear, sorrow and death (FGT)

Apart from the general comments about sharing, others noted more specific features - it promoted a focal point for all the community (students, teachers, parents) to come together, network about the products and provide opportunities to express feeling and thoughts together. It also demonstrated to many that art had many purposes, including the opportunity to share the very emotional expressions that were regarded as necessary and important at the time. As some noted:

The display time [was important] because it shared ideas and brought people together to express feelings (17M)

It opened up communication between people – it let them know how you feel and helps others open up (FGS)

The community liked the idea because it was shared between parents and students and they [the community members] learnt that expressions of sorrow (etc) could be expressed via art. (FGT)

Furthermore, sharing is often considered to be an important component of the stress cycle and indeed, many participants considered it as a coping response to alleviate the stress and discomfort

of the tsunami. Following the shock, disbelief and emergence of awareness it began the process of moving on.

It brought feelings of fear but then made me happy.....made me forget it (19M)

Helped my friends and I deal with pain by talking about it the picture I drew and shared and talked about what was happening. Drew picture of people fleeing from the waves (FGS)

Drawing made me happy and sad because I lost my brother.....I drew a picture of my brother (19M)

[Because of the programme]can throw away the pain, like a previous accident.....it can be released (FGT)

Sharing is easier when it is encouraged and supported by caring others as it supports reflection and permits the exploration of feelings and this facilitates healing. It was understood by many that expression via the expressive art activities promoted individual well-being and opportunity for discussion and listening by others at a time of personal and community turmoil. Whether it was an individual or collective activity, the emotional expression was largely considered to produce positive outcomes.

.....remembering via the programme was a negative, but in other ways was good as it opened up expression. (FGS)

It helped share the feelings rather than deal individually and get bigger problems. (17M)

It awoke my feelings and thoughts. Didn't want to think about it but drawing helped my emotions. (15M)

Often this expression of the feelings is very personal and using expressive arts provides an opportunity to share thoughts, feelings and perceptions about events perhaps in a more poignant manner than via a verbal description. For example, some of the senior students noted the very personal value of the programme to cope with the loss of family;

The programme helped me focus.....by doing the drawings.....they all had meanings.....it helped me recollect my family and the feelings about them (17M)

Drew pictures of family lost.....programme enabled me to do this to make me happy (19M)

Drew because my brother died and I loved him and missed him (19M)

At times, unintended consequences can occur in programmes. As indicated, it was considered by the children to assist them to overcome issues—mostly, it was inferred as a vehicle for abreaction and one for healing and moving on. Interestingly, however, although the programme was not designed as a therapeutic intervention for the teachers, it was indicated by some that it was beneficial for them. However, two teachers noted that revisiting the disaster via the programme had the potential to impact negatively on the children. Teacher comments included;

The programme helped me to release the grief and sorrow (FGT)

.....yes pain, but helped me move on (FGT)

It reminded them what happened.....may be some negatives there.... (FGT)

Some community members thought the programme brought pain and shouldn't be undertaken (FGT)

Although there was a very common theme of emotional release, there were other values of the programme identified. Some thought it provided a valid understanding of the meaning of the event and helped them to interpret it and promote a preparation/plan for any further calamities. Other

believed it provided a very significant historical record whilst some simply noted the (cathartic?) experience of the art activities.

Expressive arts therapies not only have therapeutic functions but can also provide needed information for understanding what had happened. At times of disasters and post-disaster, the immediate seeking of information becomes a priority—later re-activation of events is also purposeful as the events can become distorted and planning for the future requires a reality check. This clarity following the personal/community dislocation enabled a more thoughtful response. The Moving On programme provided an interpretation of the events, facilitated understanding and provided useful information.

The programme was enjoyed because it made us think about the face of the tsunami (FGS)

The pictures depicted the truth and reality (FGT)

It helped us remember..... and with understanding. (FGS)

It was useful for future calamities.... Gave advice about tsunami (19M)

In relation to this, one of the unexpected findings was that many of the teachers and students outlined how the programme outputs—such as the stories and drawings—could provide a record/reminder for future generations to inform them about the calamity.

It provided a record of what happened..... that's why it is important (17M)

It was a record and evidence for the public (FGT)

Captured the immediacy of the events (FGS)

The programme, although designed to facilitate healing also operated at another level—it provided the children with the opportunity to enjoy the use of the art (etc) resources made available to them—art was not part of the curriculum and it was a novelty to be able to use the media. Possibly however, this became a very positive experience because it helped them to escape the horrors of the event.

The art.... helped the children think and label key ideas.....the way they did it.....colour, media, the way they did it.....how applied. (FGT)

The art built motivation. (FGT)

Enjoyed the art experience..... being visual and an ongoing display of art.....this was very important (FGT)

The participants were asked to evaluate the programme and provide some suggestions for any future development. Almost all stated that the programme was worthy, acceptable as presented although a few responses indicated some considerations for any further implementation. Two of the teachers suggested it should have been extended further to the community with better facilities, resources and food provided. A number of the students wanted art activities incorporated into the curriculum and one teacher noted the pain that the children were experiencing and recommended a counselling intervention was also needed.

These findings from the surveyed participants indicated that there was a favourable response to the programme and it produced outcomes that were planned—the expressive arts promoted meaning, understanding, reflections and responses that facilitated a beginning to the healing process. Furthermore, the programme was not only therapeutic for the children but also the teachers and *aiga*. It was clear from the respondents that it was a memorable programme and provided an opportunity to 'share to heal'.

In addition to the evidence from the survey, there were also other indications that the programme was considered successful—for example, the numerous requests to share the programme. Invitations were received to make available the expressive arts outputs to the Environment Forum of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (Apia 2010) which parents and participants of the Moving On Art Therapy attended and voiced their support for further implementation of the program. The programme was also shared at the Resilience Exhibition, Bowen House, Parliament Building, Wellington (2011), the 5th Measina Conference in Apia (2011), the Sāmoa Conference National University of Sāmoa (2012) and the American Museum of Natural History in New York (2014). At these venues, some of the art work, stories and books of the children were displayed and requests for paper presentations received. The New York venue organisers also developed a web-site of the outputs and in 2010 the children's work was displayed at a memorial Service for tsunami victims with the collaboration of the National University of Sāmoa and the University of San Francisco. The family healing nights in Lalomanu, Aleipata, Lotoipue and Satitua Primary Schools in the Aleipata District in 2010 were received most positively and with considerable emotion. The Sāmoan Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development has recently requested a proposal similar to the Moving On Art Therapy to be submitted concerning its potential utilisation to assist women dealing with violence and abuse as one of their 2018 events.

A further indication of the esteem of the programme was the acceptance for a publication of a book—*O le Galulolo—Stories, Poems and Artworks by the Tsunami affected School Children of the Aleipata School District* (Latai and Taavao, 2012) and this has become a required text for the primary teacher trainees at the National University of Sāmoa. A range of other institutions indicated a desire to become involved to assist—for example, the University of San Francisco were keen for the children to release their thoughts via post-cards and the Faculty of Education at Victoria, University of Wellington as well as La Trobe, Melbourne University are keen to assist with research endeavours. Furthermore, the project, the book and the teaching of expressive arts (including expressive arts as therapies) at the NUS has consolidated the demands for art to be incorporated in the primary schools' curriculum. Recognising the importance of the programme, the Auckland Grammar Girls, Auckland National Art Supplies and New Zealand Aid provided support through teaching aids and resources for the facilitation of the intervention in 2010.

Overall, these findings indicate the success of the programme. The reports from the children, teachers and community responses provided evidence that it was considered important for the healing to help the children move on. Its impact was more than providing for the children however, as some of the teachers (as co-presenters and observers) also benefitted and the parents' involvement in the children's work and displays providing them with an insight. The subsequent interest in the programme was further evidence of the impact of the programme and its potential to facilitate healing.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this evaluation have indicated the participants rated the programme as being worthy and effective in facilitating the healing of the children. Additional support acknowledging its importance was obtained from the requests for information and exhibitions of the outputs, an acceptance of a publication about the outputs, subsequent implementation of other similar programmes and the incorporation of knowledge from the project in the student teacher training

courses offered at the National University of Sāmoa. Teachers, the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture and the community at large applauded the efforts.

This programme evaluation highlighted several salient points. Essentially, Moving On was a reactive response and this emphasises the need for a much wider preparation plan for emergencies and trauma recovery. As in most countries, attention is directed to the immediate physical rehabilitation of people during disasters and the psychological-social needs can be overlooked and under-estimated. For example, consider the very high rates of psychological needs still not met following the devastating Christchurch earthquake in 2011 (Carville 2016). A comprehensive plan needs to be developed including the physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs of the people which need the expertise of a wide range of people including those with varied therapeutic skill and knowledge. Another important consideration relates to the need for the holistic needs of children. It was clear that the only psychological support made available to the children was via the programme and adjunctive services would have been very useful and could work alongside the programme implementers. Parents can often provide personal/psychological assistance (particularly in this cultural context) but it was probably insufficient—the parents themselves were traumatised seeking support and understanding. There is no formalised psychological assistance available to schools in Sāmoa to assist with the children's (and families) difficulties. The lack of art in the curriculum of the schools was also noted by many of the children; there was a plea by them for this to be incorporated into the school day. Apart from the psychological-developmental benefits the use of art media can be a therapeutic activity in itself. A renewed push for its incorporation within the schools' curriculum is necessary.

Furthermore, it became clear that the programme was novel as it involved the community in a manner that had not been previously experienced. The children and community enjoyed the interaction around the displays of art, stories, poems, (etc) and it provided a significant insight to the parents as well as comfort to the children. It was a strength of the programme and efforts to engage in closer parent-school activities that share the specific outputs of the children would be a benefit to the children, teachers and community in furthering learning. It is axiomatic: "At the end of the day, the most overwhelming key to a child's success is the positive involvement of parents." (Jane D. Hull)

Although the programme was implemented by a local and incorporated a culturally-sensitive approach it was considered, upon reflection, that additional features would may be an advantage for the participants. For example, the Latai and McDonald (2016) report on the programme indicated that some of the children responded in a spiritual manner and this was not always followed up in discussions. Indeed, this reminded the reviewers of the importance of the *fonofale* model (Pulotu-Endemann 2009) of well-being which although developed by a Sāmoan New Zealander, provides a timely reminder of the importance of holistic contextual development. Incorporating this model within future therapeutic programmes would be most useful as it emphasises an integrated perspective of dealing with the foundational culture and family issues and incorporating physical, spiritual, mental and other factors (age, context, etc).

As indicated, following the Art as Therapy implementation, there were many requests (both nationally and internationally) to share the programme and its outputs and to develop similar programmes for other contexts. This highlighted the importance that was attached to it and underscored the need to promote the development of such programmes. Since then, the programme protocols have altered in response to the experiences and research ensuring an

improved and strengthened strategy for future use. For example, incorporation of more spiritual aspects, increased parental and community involvement, collection of qualitative and quantitative process data whenever possible during implementation, engagement of some others to assist with future programme implementation and have a readily available supply of resources that could be immediately used.

This evaluation has several limitations. It was exploratory, limited in scope, involved a small number of participants and utilised qualitative data only. Because the evaluation was undertaken some years later, the access to available participants was limited (because many of the programme participants had moved away from the area) and it was likely that recall of events may have been incomplete impacting upon the validity and reliability of the findings. Therefore, because of these factors, a limited generalisation of the findings is only possible. Additional research could have examined the perspectives of the other key actors (e.g., teachers, parents, community leaders) in more detail and quantitative studies may have assessed the importance of the programme as well as rank the importance of the various components. Nevertheless, the evaluation being years later had an advantage because it provided some insight into the sustainability of the intervention impact.

The Moving On Arts Therapy programme was a noteworthy success. It provided much needed support to the children, teachers and parents to cope with the traumatic experience of the tsunami. It was recognised by others as a significant development and has been used to begin the development of programmes in other contexts. Contributions to the knowledge bases about expressive arts therapies has occurred and this has included practical approaches for coping with natural disasters and informing processes for disaster assistance. Of most importance, it provided support for the children to heal. "Whether through art, play, music, movement, enactment, or creative writing, expressive therapies stimulate the senses, thereby sensitizing individuals to untapped aspects of themselves and thus facilitating self-discovery, change, and reparation." (Malchiodi 2005:14)

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