

“El Viento Salvaje” (The Savage Wind)

Using A Children’s Storybook in Building Resiliency in Puerto Rico

Roshan Khatri, MPHc, Department of Global Health

BACKGROUND

Story telling is a socio-cultural tool, which can assist children in articulating their thoughts and feelings, and help them make sense of their world.

OBJECTIVE

To encourage coping techniques and build resiliency in children and their communities in Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

STRATEGY

- “El Viento Salvaje” (The Savage Wind) along with its caregiver guide was written to help the children of Puerto Rico understand what they experienced in Hurricane Maria, 2017.
- This is the sixth book of its kind following books for Haiti, Philippines, Nepal, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia and refugee camps in Greece.
- Training sessions on the content and use of this book were completed in two sessions prior to its distribution.
- The first session included mental health professionals and organizations working with psychosocial support, including the government and largest private service provider, The Office of Quality of Administration of Health Services and Against Addiction (ASSMCA) and APS HEALTH respectively.
- The second group was composed of 46 participants strategically chosen from 21 different disciplines to represent the island geographically.



Mi nombre es Valeria. El nombre de mi loro es Maya. Vivo en la hermosa soleada isla de Puerto Rico con mi hermano Carlos. Éramos muy felices.

My name is Valeria. My parrot's name is Maya. I live on the beautiful sunny island of Puerto Rico with my brother Carlos. We were very happy.



Después de la tormenta salimos de nuestro refugio. Las casas fueron volcadas al revés y muchos techos fueron rasgados de las casas. Las palmas de coco cayeron y fueron despojadas de sus hojas. No sabíamos qué hacer.

One day a terrible storm came. Rain fell and the wind even blew frogs from the trees. We all were very frightened, even the animals.



Trato de no pensar en la terrible tormenta. Temo que vuelva. A veces me duele el estómago y mi hermano Carlos tiene dolores de cabeza.

After the storm we came out of our shelter. Houses were blown over and roof tops were torn off. Palm trees fell and were stripped of their leaves. We did not know what to do.



A veces no quiero ver a la gente o jugar con amigos. A veces sólo quiero estar sola.

Sometimes I do not want to go to bed. I think of the storm even though I don't want to. I am afraid I will have bad dreams. I can't sleep well and feel tired all the time.



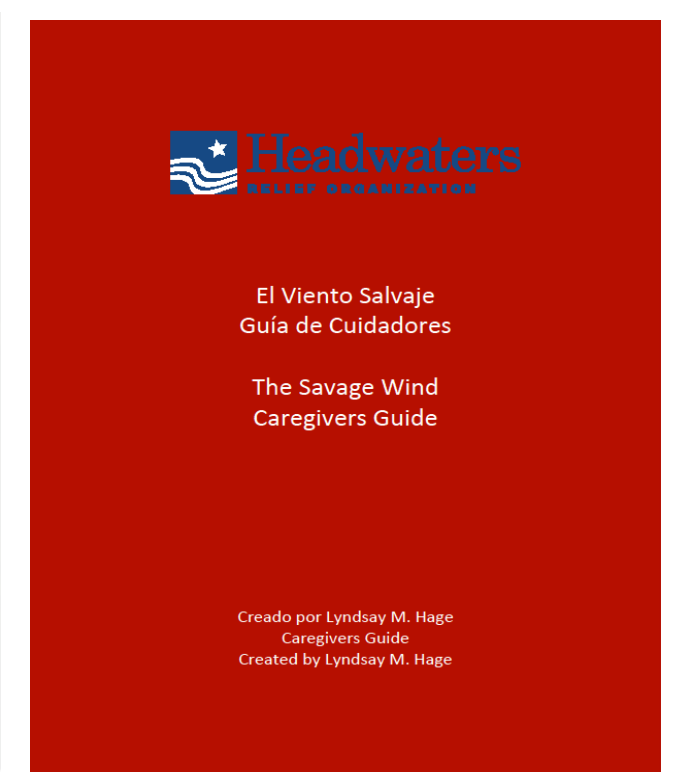
Después de hablar con la Srta. Acosta me sentí bien. Mi hermano dijo que también se sentía mejor. Hablar con adultos puede ayudar. También encontré una coquí y la llamé Sebastián.

It felt good talking about my feelings with Ms. Acosta. My brother said he felt better too. Talking to adults can help. I also found a frog and named him Sebastian.



Necesitamos trabajar juntos para arreglar lo que la tormenta destruyó. Necesitamos hablar de nuestros sentimientos y ayudarnos unos a otros. Un día mi isla será hermosa de nuevo.

We need to work together to fix what was broken by the storm. We need to talk about our feelings and help each other. One day my island will be beautiful again.



OUTCOME

- This book is designed to be used in a group teaching format. It is free for distribution by schools, families and communities.
- Six hundred books have been distributed. The positive feedback and demand for additional books has been overwhelming.
- Formal assessment of this intervention is yet to be made.

DISCUSSION

- Children are one of the most vulnerable groups in disasters. They can play a pivotal role in developing resiliency but this is yet to be recognized.
- Stories initiate a process of learning and empowerment allowing children to reinterpret a situation of adversity and positively redefine their own experiences.
- These stories also engage their families, teachers, caregivers and their communities in discussion.
- Diligent research on people, animals, vegetation, artwork as well as culture allows us to craft close representations for the story.
- Oversight by individuals from a similar cultural background and review from experts in psychology, culture and trauma response is important.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Resilience while complex, can be fostered and developed through strategies and active engagement.
- Storytelling and story books can serve as an important tool in the development of resiliency not only for children but for the community at large.

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