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Symposium Introduction

A Psycho-Cultural Program of Research to Assist Children Affected by the Sichuan Earthquake, China, 12 May, 2008

Convenor: Daphne Keats (Daphne.Keats@newcastle.edu.au)
University of Newcastle, Australia

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INTRODUCTION

This symposium reports on the response of a research team from the School of Psychology, University of Newcastle and the China-Australia Centre for Cross-Cultural Studies at Sichuan University to the plea from leaders of the Qiang Ethnic Community to help the children who suffered from the severe earthquake which devastated their community on 12 May, 2008. Papers to be presented include: 1) Background to the research and discussion of theoretical, cultural and research challenges; 2) Impact of the earthquake from the Qiang perspective; 3) Data analysis from a survey of current caregivers reporting the extent of the children's experiences, and from interviews with children in four categories: children who had lost parents, children whose parents could not care for them, children hospitalised from injuries, and children who appeared to have suffered very little; 4) Development of an innovative, culturally appropriate rehabilitation program designed to foster positive growth and help children meet the challenges for the future. The program is being carried out in three sites in close cooperation with local Qiang leaders and volunteers: 1) Luo Bu village, situated in a mountainous area severely damaged by the earthquake; 2) a large school in the town of Wen Chuan attended by Qiang children from many remote villages; 3) Wen Chuan Hospital trauma clinic. A monitored program of group activities is the core of the rehabilitation strategy. Issues of cultural relevance of western individualistic methods are discussed.