

LASER PULSE

Long-term Assistance and Services for Research (LASER)
Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine (PULSE)

Adapting the Spanish Version of Group Problem Management Plus (Group PM+) for Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants in Colombia

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ABOUT LASER PULSE

LASER (Long-term Assistance and Services for Research) PULSE (Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine) is a \$70M program funded through USAID's Innovation, Technology, and Research Hub, that delivers research-driven solutions to field-sourced development challenges in USAID partner countries.

A consortium led by Purdue University, with core partners Catholic Relief Services, Indiana University, Makerere University, and the University of Notre Dame, implements the LASER PULSE program through a growing network of 3,000+ researchers and development practitioners in 74 countries.

LASER PULSE collaborates with USAID missions, bureaus, and independent offices, and other local stakeholders to identify research needs for critical development challenges, and funds and strengthens the capacity of researcher-practitioner teams to co-design solutions that translate into policy and practice.

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SUGGESTED CITATION

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ACRONYMS

Group PM+	Group Problem Management Plus
HIAS	Hebrew Immigration Aid Society
PM+	Problem Management Plus
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization

BACKGROUND

Group Problem Management Plus (PM+) PM+ is a trans-diagnostic, brief psychological intervention developed by the World Health Organization ([WHO 2020](#)). Group PM+ consists of five sessions delivered in five consecutive weeks and includes strategies that are aimed towards decreasing symptoms of depression, anxiety, general distress, and other related conditions. Group PM+ is designed to be delivered by non-specialists, persons without a formal education and licensure in psychology or mental health. The Group PM+ manual has only been recently translated into Spanish and before this LASER PULSE funded project had not been implemented in Colombia as a group intervention.

As part of the LASER PULSE funded project, the team adapted the Spanish version of the Group PM+ manual (<https://www.who.int/publications-detail-redirect/9789240008106>) to work with Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Colombia. This adapted manual reflects the outcome of the cultural adaptation work undertaken by this group in order to culturally and contextually adapt the Spanish translated Group PM+ manual for this study. Find the complete adapted manual in the annex. This process included interviews with community stakeholders, training of trainers, translation of the manual, manual read throughs, and practice rounds by supervisors and facilitators, all of which led to an iterative process of adaptation.

PURPOSE

The World Health Organization has developed a number of scalable mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) interventions, including Group PM+. Given that the evidence base was developed on randomized controlled trials using the original and freely available version of the manual (<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240008106>), the WHO strongly encourages those using Group PM+ to maintain strong fidelity to the strategies and concepts found in the manual. However, these interventions are intended to be used globally, and given the wide range of ways in which people conceptualize topics such health, mental health, adversity, stress, and healing, prior to implementation, it is recommended that a process of cultural and contextual adaptation take place. Cultural and contextual adaptation refers to a process in which evidence-based treatments or protocols are modified to reflect the language, cultural references, and contexts in which the intervention will be employed. This team carried out a variety of strategies with local stakeholders who were able to provide input and guidance on the ways in which the original Group PM+ manual could better reflect the cultural practices, aesthetics, and values of the intended recipients. Incorporating cultural and contextual elements that take account of the local context and concerns the recipient population can also improve attitude, engagement, access, and outcomes. Moreover, adaptations were made to the ways in which the intervention was delivered in order to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

ADAPTATIONS

Here is how we adapted it and why.

Changes to Group Size. The size of the group was changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The protocol proposed for the grant anticipated approximately 15 individuals per group. However, this study began at the beginning of the pandemic in which there was very serious concern about the exposure and transmission of COVID-19. It was therefore decided to reduce the number of participants per group to 8. Sessions were also held primarily outdoors and the smaller group size provided greater flexibility for where the interventions took place.

Changes to Language. There were several minor changes to the phrases and terms used throughout the manual to better reflect the language of the intended recipients. For example, “dificultades psicológicas” was changed to “problemas.” (page 2). It was suggested during qualitative interviews with local community members that “psychological difficulties” might not be clear for participants, or make them feel they are somehow dysfunctional. Please see table for full list of language adaptations.

Table 1: Language adaptations

Type of Adaptation	Implementation (what should be changed)	Rationale	Source of Adaptation
Language: technical terms replaced by colloquialisms	Pag. 2. Change "dificultades psicológicas" for "problemas"	"psychological difficulties" might not be clear for participants, or make them feel they are somehow dysfunctional	Group PM+ manual Appendix A
Language: use of local idioms	page 3. Change "estudiando en la escuela, un terciario o una universidad?" for "estudiando en el colegio, una institución técnica o una universidad?"	in many spanish-speaking countries, the term "escuela" (school) is not common, and it can also be used as a reference to a university or other institution different from "colegio"	Group PM+ manual Appendix A
Language: use of local idioms	page 3. change "en cohabitación" for "conviviendo con alguien"	"en cohabitación" is not a common designation for unmarried couples who live together in the Colombian and Venezuelan context.	Group PM+ manual Appendix A



Language: translation	page 7 change "oyo hablar de abordar el estres" for "escucho la estrategia de enfrentando el estres"	the word "abordaje" is a technical language, it sounds easier to understand the word "manejando".	Group PM+ manual Appendix EJ_FEM page 7
Language: use of local idioms	page 19 change "sentarse en un banco proximo a su vivienda " for "estar sentada afuera de su casa"	is more typical of the context sitting outside the home	Group PM+ manual Appendix EJ_FEM page 19
Language: use of local idioms	page 19 change "solía salir a tomar té" for "solia salir a tomar un cafe"	it is more typical of the context to drink coffee than to drink tea	Group PM+ manual Appendix EJ_FEM page 19
Language: technical terms replaced by colloquialisms	page 14. once again, it is suggested to change the words "dificultades psicológicas" for "problemas"	"psychological difficulties" might not be clear for participants, or make them feel they are somehow dysfunctional	Group PM+ manual Appendix A
Language: translation	"¿Quisiera alguno contar sus experiencias de sentirse triste y no poder hacer sus actividades?"	The sentence could be changed by "¿Quisiera alguno contar sus experiencias sobre sentirse triste y no poder hacer sus actividades?" to make easier it's comprehension	Group PM+ manual Chapter 7, p. 81
Language: translation	Page 1. "refrescos" should be changed by "refrigerios"	the word "refrigerios" fits better in the colombian context	Group PM+ manual Chapter 6
Language: technical terms replaced by colloquialisms	Page 3. Change this translation "Puedo ver que este problema parece no tener solución, pero creo que usted podría resolverlo si..." to "Puedo ver que este problema parece no tener solución, pero creo que usted podría resolverlo parcialmente si..."	To add the word "parcialmente" could make easier the comprehension of the sentence	Group PM+ manual Chapter 6

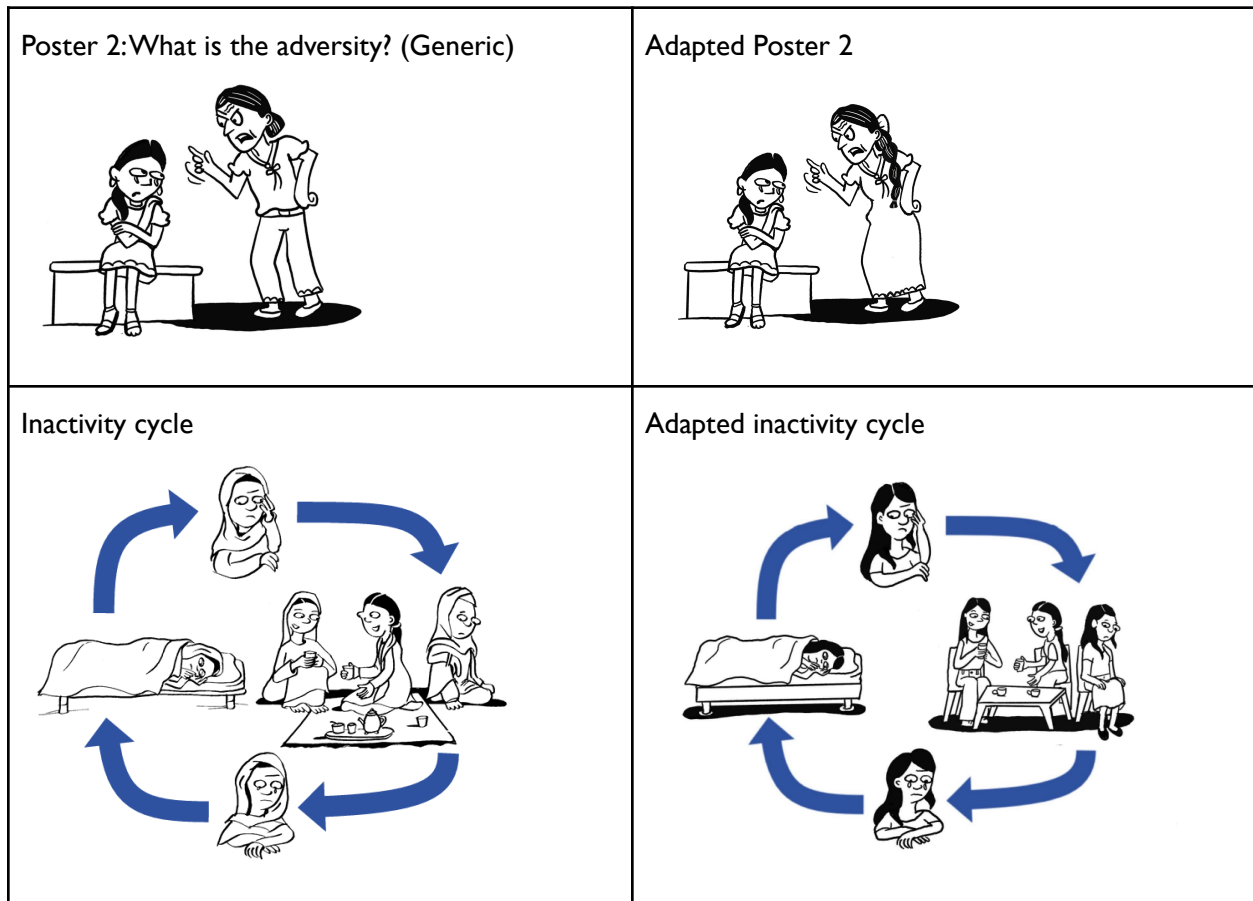
Changes to Methods. Several changes were made for the implementation of Group PM+. Whereas the original manual emphasized the importance of neutrality between the facilitator and the intended recipients, feedback received during the adaptation process underscored the importance of diversity in the backgrounds and perspectives of those participating as facilitator or recipients of Group PM+ (page 15). Adaptations were also made in several instances to the roles of the facilitators in navigating group dynamics and responding to individuals in distress (page 17).

Changes to Materials. During the beginning stages of implementation it became clear that due to issues of health (e.g. COVID-19) and climate (e.g. flooding) there were times in which clients were unable to attend sessions. In order to ensure that all group members had access to the strategies being taught, digital flyers were sent to all members of the group (whether or not they attended). All group members were encouraged to review and practice the strategy before their next session.

Changes to illustrations. Throughout the qualitative interviews, local stakeholders identified a number of images in the manual that they felt did not reflect the context. For example, women sitting on blankets were changed to women sitting in chairs, rural landscapes were changed to urban settings, and headscarves were removed.

Table 2: Adaptations to illustrations

Original illustration	New illustration
<p data-bbox="203 1163 365 1192">Group norms</p> 	<p data-bbox="826 1163 1084 1192">Adapted group norms</p> 



RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a growing evidence base showing that Group PM+ can be an effective scalable mental health intervention for individuals experiencing mild to moderate levels of distress, especially in contexts in which there may be significant gaps in access to specialized care. The core concepts that were used to develop the evidence base for Group PM+ were retained in this version. Although the WHO developed Group PM+ for the purposes of widespread uptake and dissemination, it is strongly recommended that such interventions are adapted culturally and contextually prior to implementation. To date, no studies have been published on the Spanish translated Group PM+ manual translated by PAHO or the adapted version of the Spanish translated version used in this study. Therefore, future work would benefit from the study of the Spanish translated version of Group PM+ (original PAHO translation or this adaptation). Furthermore, while the adapted version of the Group PM+ manual may be suitable for supporting individuals in this region (e.g. Venezuela, Colombia), there is considerable diversity among individuals and communities in the region and those planning on using this version of Group PM+ would benefit from the inclusion of cultural and contextual frameworks prior to implementation. Additionally, some of the adaptations around delivery made to the manual were made to address specific concerns (e.g. COVID-19) and may not be as relevant in the future.

ANNEX

Group Problem Management Plus (Group PM+) is a brief psychosocial intervention developed by the World Health Organization (WHO). Group PM+ is considered a scalable mental health intervention in that it was designed to be delivered by non-mental health specialists in contexts in which there may be barriers to specialized mental health care.

Although some previous work had been done in Colombia with individual PM+, this is to our knowledge the first study in Colombia implementing Group PM+. Furthermore, this study specifically aimed to better understand ways to fill gaps in access to support among Venezuelan women living in Colombia.

At the time of this study, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) had translated into Spanish the Group PM+ manual. Throughout the beginning of the study, the research team carried out adaptation work in which a number of changes were made to the content (e.g. word choices, phrasing), illustrations, and implementation strategy of Group PM+.

The summary of the changes that were made to the PAHO Spanish translated manual are detailed in this report.

The original Spanish translated manual is publicly available and can be found at (<https://iris.paho.org/handle/10665.2/54762>)