Where are they all coming from?
Child Mental Health Services
Response to Refugee Crisis

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Status of current evidence

- Epidemiology
- Risk and protective factors
- Interventions
- Service models

Characteristics of refugee and asylum-seeking children

- Complex needs
- Psychopathology
- Trauma, but also socioeconomic issues, adjustment to new society, language
- Access and engagement with services

Unaccompanied minors

- Lack of primary caregiver
- Sequential stressors and rejections
- Exploitation
- Varied care systems
- Social isolation

The Gaza studies: 1998 – to date

Thabet, Vostanis and colleagues

- High rates of PTSD and emotional disorders (but different pathways?)
- Direct and indirect impact
- Risk and protective factors

Impact of trauma on Syrian refugee children in Istanbul
(n=263 - Eruyar, Maltby & Vostanis)

- Pre-migratory war trauma predicted child PTSD symptoms

- Parental psychopathology predicted general child mental health symptoms after accounting for trauma exposure

Service issues

- Help-seeking and care pathways
- Legal framework
- Mental health concepts
- Stigma
- Carers and agencies involved
- Acute and therapeutic phase
- Service gaps

Unaccompanied minors' perceptions of mental health services
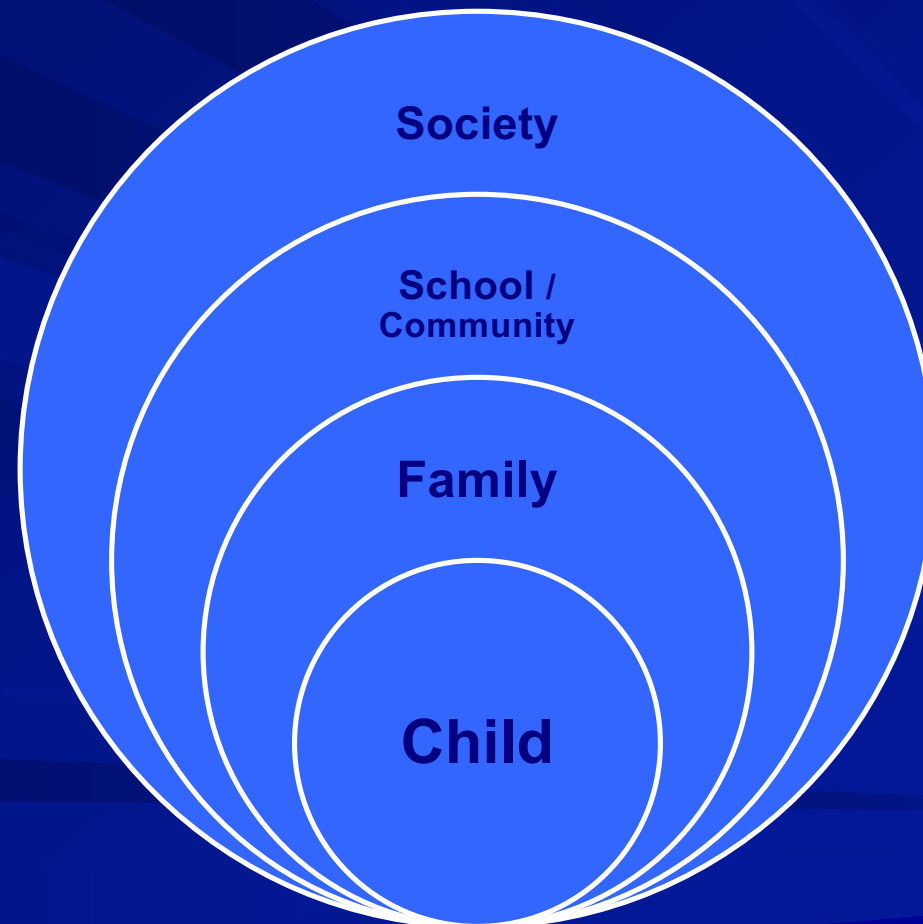
Majumder, O'Reilly, Karim & Vostanis, 2015

- **Mental health concepts**
  'mental, not crazy, headache, eyes hurt'

- **Association with asylum-seeking**
  'difficult journey, alone, scared, worry about family'

- **Service experiences**
  'you don't understand me, not him, not safe, trust is most important'

- **Opinion of treatments**
  'now I know you can talk, does not help reminding me, medication get better'

Assessment challenges

- Cultural discordance
- Preparation and engagement
- Language / Interpreter
- Lack of history
- Multiple informants
- Developmental capacity
- Child must feel/be safe

Viewing refugee children within a resilience ecological systems framework
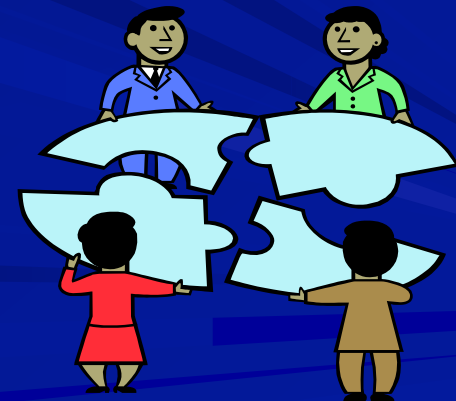
Society

School / Community

Family

Child

Interventions

- Psychoeducation
- Narrative (variations , e.g. NET)
- Trauma-focused CBT
- EMDR
- Creative
- Attachment (theraplay)
- Family
- Behavioural
- Pharmacological

Service model for vulnerable groups

- Integration (wrap-around)
- Joint care pathways
- Direct access
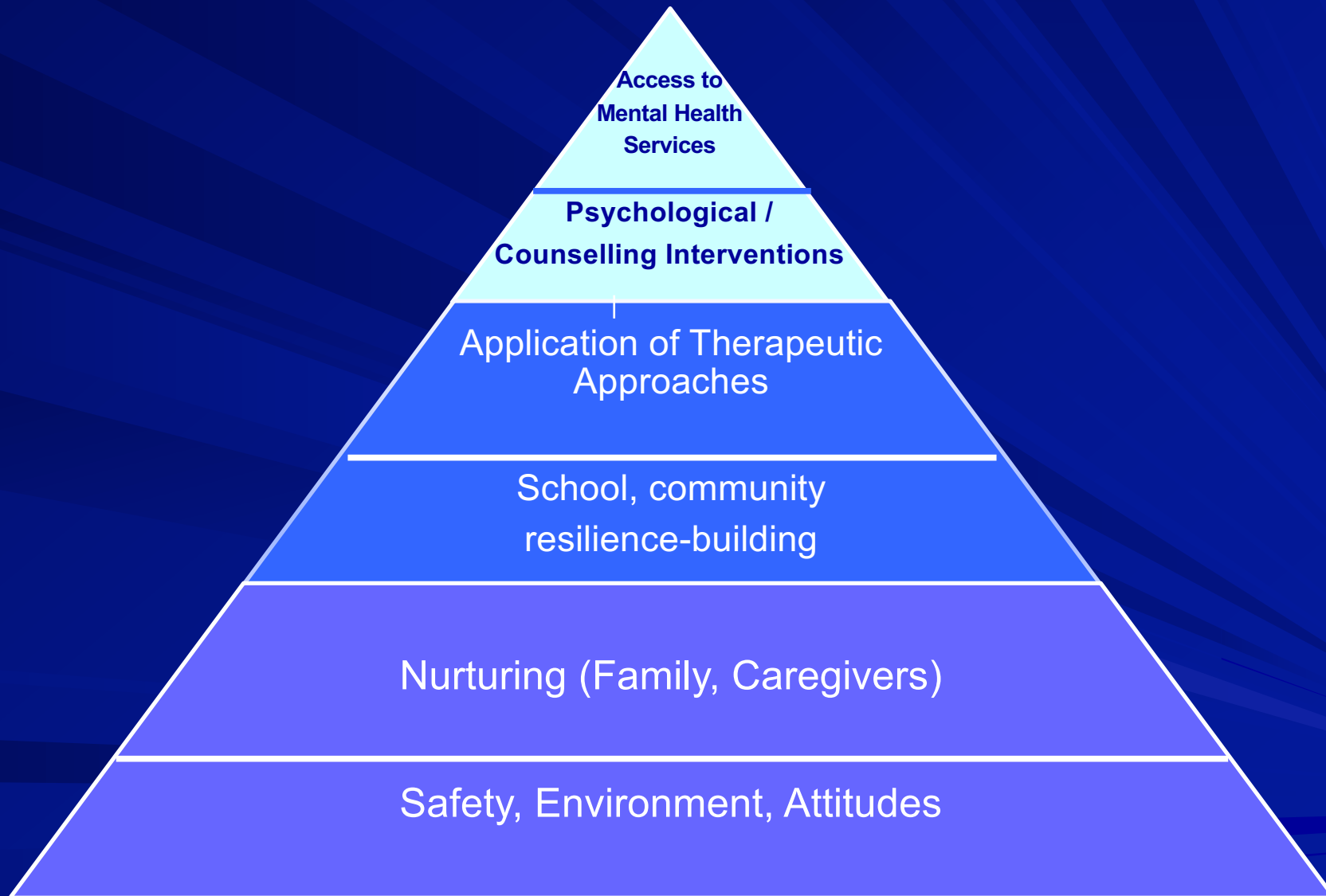- Skills in applied interventions
- Consultation

World Awareness for Children in Trauma

www.wacit.org

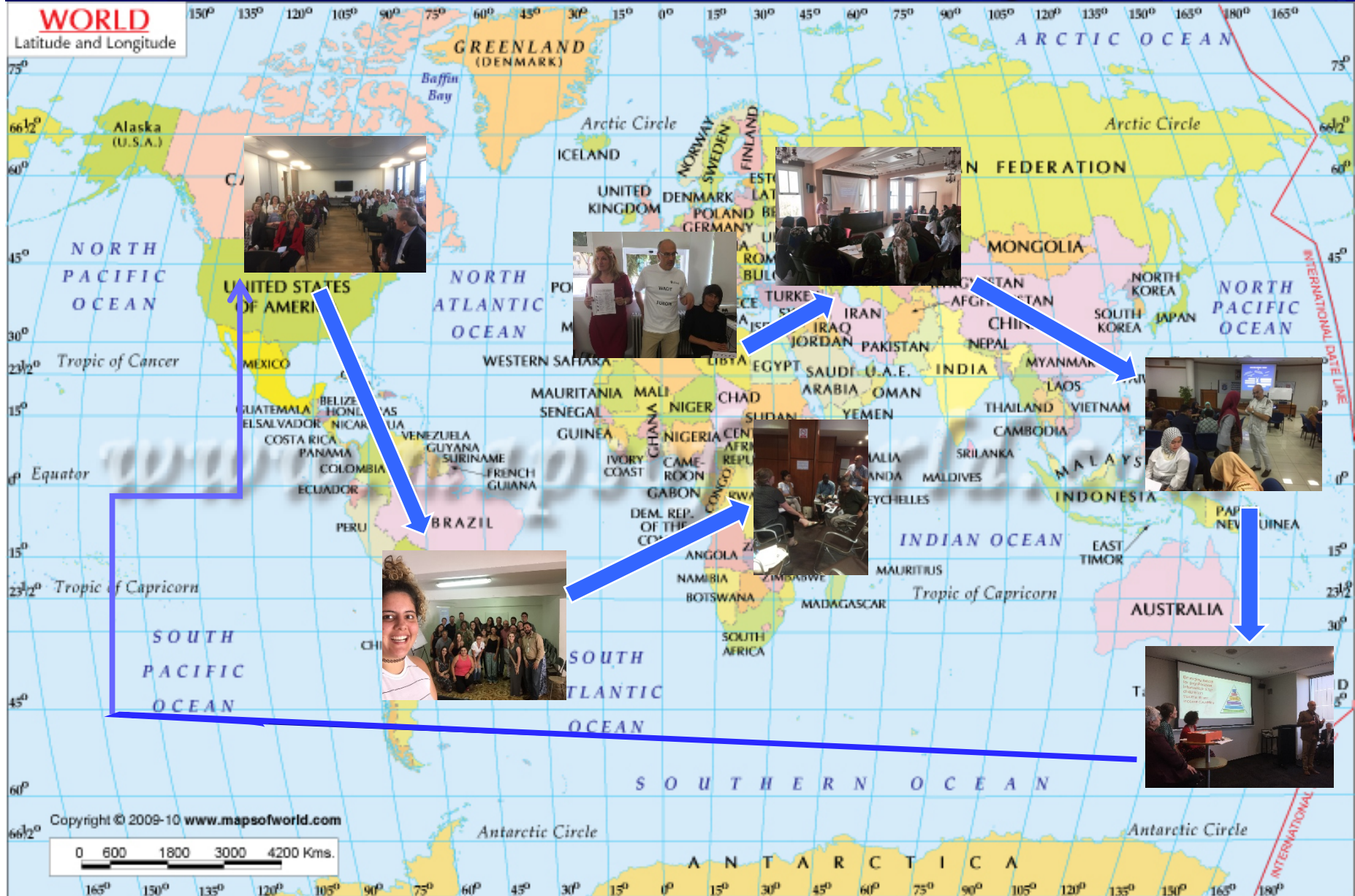www.panosvostanis.wordpress.com

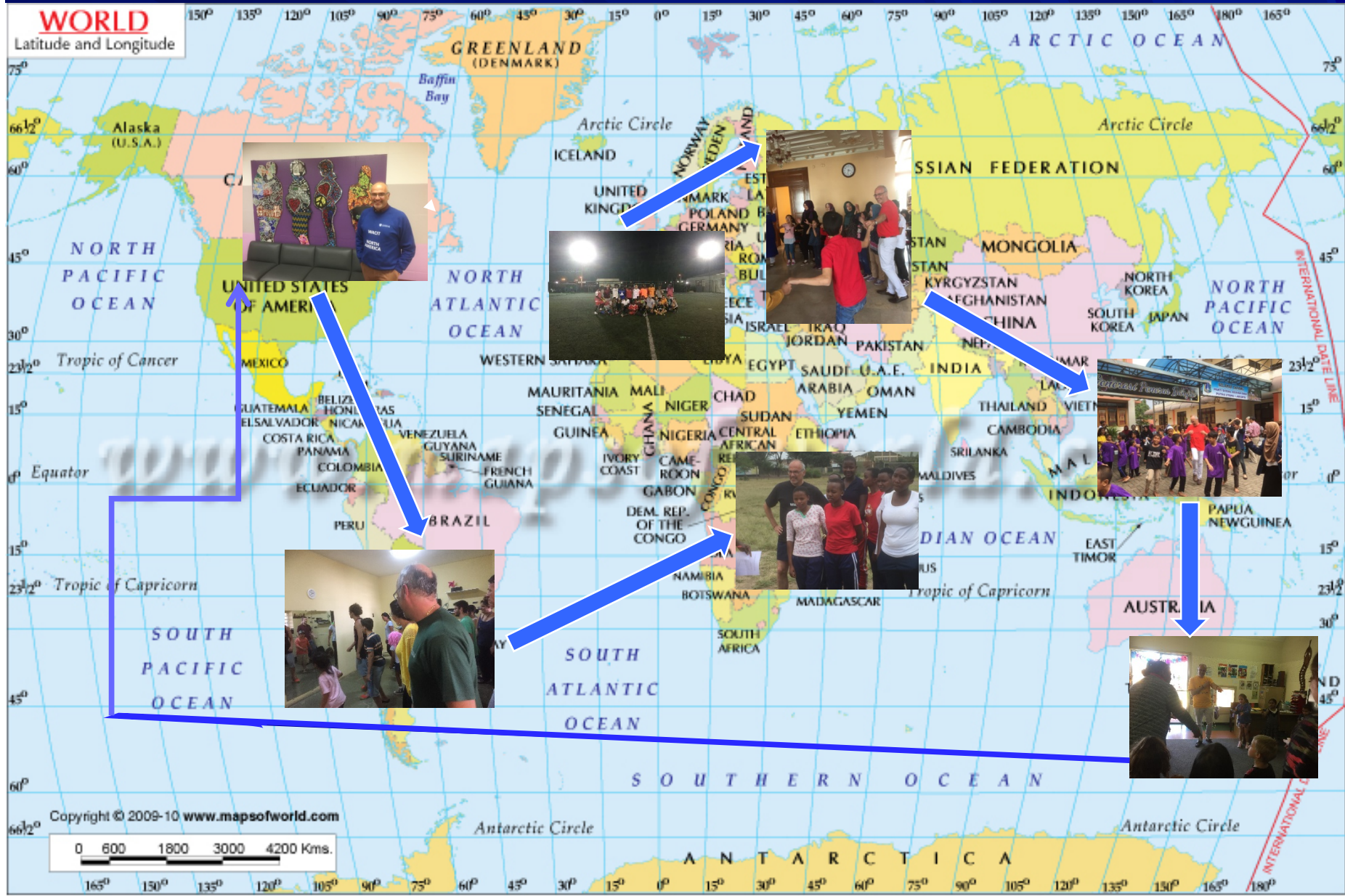# WACIT Psychosocial Model

WACIT activities

- **Interprofessional training**
  workshops, e-learn, resources
- **Capacity-building**
  service consultancy according to model
- **Research**
  needs analysis, resilience mechanisms, evaluation of interventions
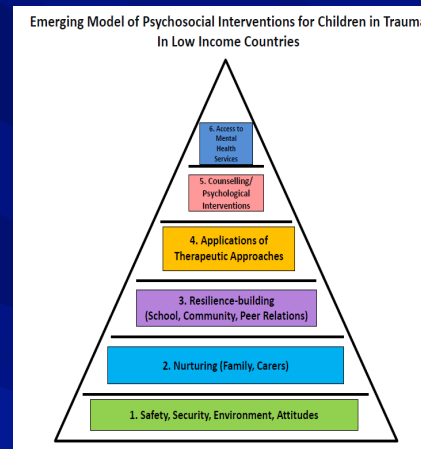
WACIT 6x6 Launch
Child Trauma Workshops

WACIT 6x6 Launch
Children's Events

Mapping WACIT model to Athens refugee settings

How can child mental health professionals help?

- Influence policy
- Child-centred reception centres, camps, other transitional environments
- Support care placements
- Training for volunteers/staff
- Establish inter-agency networks
- Adapt specialist services
- Establish evidence