



Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal

Official Transcript: Jorge Sierralta (Part 7 of 10)



Role:	Staff Psychologist
Country of Origin:	Peru
Interview Date:	17 October 2008
Location:	Arusha, Tanzania
Interviewer:	Lisa P. Nathan Donald J Horowitz
Videographer:	Nell Carden Grey
Interpreter:	None

Interview Summary

Jorge Sierralta talks about his role as a psychologist and social counselor for the United Nations and reflects on the challenges of working with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. He discusses his work as a counselor at the ICTR, including the mental health education and support services that have been introduced. Sierralta describes various coping mechanisms employed by Tribunal staff as well as the stigma associated with seeking counseling.

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Part 7

- 00:00 **Donald J Horowitz: You, you came here, the reason, at least one of the main reasons you came here, was because of the potential downsizing of the staff here because of the potential closure of, of the ICTR. And I – you’ve obviously dealt with other issues as well as we just described.**
- 00:28 **DJH: Tell us what, what you’re doing about that downsizing and how that seems to be working? And I know, I’ll preface it by saying I did read a talk to the staff by the Registrar himself, in which he appointed you and Mr. Cald-, Calderone to work together on this, on this subject.**
- 00:56 Yeah, I think the downsizing is – you know, reorganization of any big structure like ICTR of course is going to create a lot of stress, anxiety. So (___), we need to increase the, the support because we, we increase the demands on people when it increase the support systems, so. And, and because also the, the idea is to create this mobility program if for people to look inside, in-house, and not to look out-, outside.
- 01:36 **DJH: By in-house do you mean in the UN?**
- 01:39 In, no I was . . .
- 01:40 **DJH: Or, or in ICTR?**
- 01:41 In ICTR. You know the mood is people are leaving. If people get opportunities, they, they go and I do not blame people because loyal – there is a loyalty but at a certain point, if you know that the mission is downsizing, then people just go to, to a better place. So it’s a migration of staff, which creates also that pause, a vacant, internal pause in there so we want to choose to . . .
- 02:17 So, there is now a, I would say, a natural downsizing because people are going by – if they get opportunities they go. But when they go, they create a spot, yeah, that needs to be filled. Instead of bringing somebody from outside, we want to fill this gap with somebody who is already inside so that was the idea of . . .
- 02:41 And it, it was the idea also to show that administration looks after staff, that, yeah, so.
- 02:53 **DJH: One of the first things you said when you walked in here today before we started the interview is staff is an asset and we need to recognize that.**
- 03:00 Staff is an asset and, and investing on well-being is very important because, yeah it’s not important but it even is cost effective. It’s reduced turnover. It increase morale. It improve efficiency. It decrease absenteeism. It decrease medical leave.

- 03:27 So there's so many mechanism that we need to put in place. And also just we're, I mean nowadays, my office is involved also in the, in the fitness recreation center here.
- 03:46 So we just few months ago opened a gym. We're going to open a fitness center, so we're going to offer a lot of fitness activities. So we hire already one trainer. We are going to hire one more, so the support is increasing. You know it should be proportional. So, so I think it's, it's a very good faith from the administration, from the management.
- 04:13 So, on top of that, we have this mobility, internal mobility.
- 04:17 DJH: Does it seem to be, I mean it's, it's early yet to, to, to know the how, the sure outcome – does the mobility, has it been working or is it too soon to tell?**
- 04:28 You know, I, I, I – my criteria of success is not by how many people we, even if we, one person, for this person we change his life, for this family, for this kids, you see it is . . . so this is how we are looking at the moment.
- 04:49 Of course we want to help a lot of people who, we expect people – that a lot of people will benefit. But we are also, yeah, happy if we can help at least one person.
- 05:02 DJH: Have there been one or two or three or so far since April?**
- 05:07 The, no. The, this internal mobility is going to be, we are going to put in place now.
- 05:13 DJH: Oh, okay.**
- 05:13 So it's just a draft. We just draft few days ago the, so it's not yet, it's not running this. So it's, we started just so we just went to . . .
- 05:24 DJH: Okay, so you have a draft, which I guess the Registrar would have to approve, and then you go forward.**
- 05:29 Yeah, yeah.
- 05:29 DJH: Okay.**