

December 1, 2019
Sammamish, State of Washington

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Twenty years ago, in December 1999, Venezuela suffered an enormous flood that killed between 15,000 and 50,000 people and left hundreds of thousands of people traumatized and homeless. The people of Venezuela met the challenge by carrying food and water to be shipped out to the distribution centers, donating money for the survivors, and working in the shelters. Mental health workers of all disciplines and theoretical orientations organized themselves spontaneously and entered shelters to provide crisis counseling to the thousands of people who had been traumatized by the disaster. Many survivors developed post traumatic stress disorders.

Concerned about the inevitability of survivors developing psychological stress disorders, I wrote, the day after the flood, an article on *Crisis Intervention after Major Disasters*. Feeling I was on a mission, I completed it in one night. The next day **Adriana Prengler** translated it into Spanish and we sent it out on the Internet where it found its way into shelters all across the country.

A year and a half later (2002) I organized a small program, along with my colleague **Prof. Martín Villalobos**, at the Universidad Central de Venezuela, in which three university students, **Mónica Fraca**, **Marjorie Gutiérrez** and **Sabrina Ramírez**, offered a brief art psychotherapy intervention to a group of traumatized children living in the flood zone. After the program we collected some of the children's drawings and stories, photocopied them, and bound them into a little booklet (*Cuentos de la Inundación*) that we distributed to hundreds of students and colleagues across the country. We also presented the children's drawings and stories in conferences, on TV, and in the newspapers. The hope was that the children's efforts at elaborating their individual traumas would reach people all across the country and naturally open the possibility of people, in the privacy of their own homes, thinking about and talking about their own traumatic experiences as a way of elaborating those traumas.

This December 2019 marks the 20th anniversary of the Venezuelan flood of 1999 and in commemoration I have prepared the following PDF versions of the little booklet **Stories of the Flood** (in English) and **Cuentos de la Inundación** (en español). Included are descriptions of our work, some stories and drawings of the flood, and a beautiful case of a brief four session crisis intervention conducted by **Adriana Prengler** that has been presented in Venezuela, the United States, China, as well as at the International Psychoanalytical Association Congress in Nice, France

in 2001. I have also added, at the end, my article *Crisis Intervention after Major Disasters*.

Please feel free to send it to those of your friends and colleagues that may be interested.

Saludos,
Daniel Benveniste
<https://benvenistephd.com/>