

GLOBAL MENTAL HEALTH  
WEBINAR SERIES:

# CRITICAL, CULTURAL, AND PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVES

## “Juntas Podemos”: A pilot study of participatory action learning cycles for improved well-being among internally displaced persons in Colombia

### ABSTRACT

Mental health problems in conflict-affected countries is a complex issue that requires further attention. There is still no consensus on effective psychosocial interventions after exposure to traumatic experiences. Most efforts focus on clinical approaches, with an emphasis on individual diagnosis and treatment. This is also the case in Colombia, where decades of conflict have resulted in the internal displacement of over 8 million persons, and over 9 million victims. Support is anchored to short-term interventions, which have reached less than 10% of those in need. Community-based approaches providing psychosocial scaffolding for communities have much to offer the mental health landscape.

This presentation reports on a pilot project which implemented participatory action research cycles as a community-led response to conflict-related emotional distress for internally displaced persons in the Cundinamarca Department. Forty men and women were randomly sampled from the National Victims register to participate. Overall, participants indicated that the intervention positively impacted their mental health and wellbeing in the following areas: Identifying support systems; Exploring identity; Telling “our story” and Looking to the future. Implications for future work in this area are discussed.

### MODERATOR

**Mónica Ruiz-Casares**

PhD, MSc, MA, LLB  
Associate Professor  
Division of Social and Transcultural Psychiatry  
McGill University



### SPEAKER

Dr. Rochelle Burgess is a leading community psychologist specialising in community-led approaches to health in contexts of adversity. For the past decade she has driven agendas to re-imagine the role of communities in the Movement for Global Mental Health, and acknowledge the importance of social interventions in addressing structural determinants of poor mental health. She holds a PhD and MSc in Social Psychology from the LSE and a BSc (hons) in Psychology from McMaster University. She has led and contributed to projects in a range of settings, including: South Africa, Colombia, Nigeria, Kingdom of Eswatini, Zimbabwe and the UK. She is a Lecturer in Global Health, Deputy Director of UCL Centre for Global Non-Communicable Diseases; and Founder and Director of UCL's Global Network on Mental Health and Child Marriage. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society for Public Health and a member of the UK Trauma Council.

**November 26, 2020**

**15:00-16:30 (ET)**

To register: <https://forms.gle/zonTqPh33UmExwtEA>