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With a background in Medical and Psychiatric Social Work and Public Health and having a deep interest in vulnerable populations, particularly in children in difficult circumstances, I spent several years working in emergency and humanitarian contexts in Asia, Africa and the Middle-East, in countries such as Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Chad, Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somaliland, Iraq and Syria. My work in natural disasters, epidemics, and war-torn areas with vulnerable and at-risk communities, including displaced populations spanned a range of technical areas, namely maternal & child health, nutrition and food security, water and sanitation, and child and adolescent mental and psychosocial healthcare; in these, I was involved in program design and implementation, monitoring & evaluation, and human resource development. Almost always with a child-focus, my work in humanitarian aid also enabled me to develop an understanding of the importance of transdisciplinary approaches to addressing complex systemic problems in vulnerable populations.

In recent years, I designed and implemented a unique public mental health and child protection initiative SAMVAD (Support, Advocacy & Mental health interventions for children in Vulnerable circumstances And Distress), a National Initiative & Integrated Resource for Child Protection, Mental Health, & Psychosocial Care. Established by Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India, that was located in Dept. of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at National Institute of Mental Health & Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bangalore, India. I am experienced in providing interventions on protection-related issues such as childhood trauma, abuse, violence, adoption, and children in conflict with law, to name a few. Consequently, I have developed a number of intervention methodologies and materials for assessment and engagement with children and adolescents, including life skills and personal safety education. A large component of my work has involved development and implementation of training & teaching programs through the use of pedagogies of participatory and creative methodologies; I train various cadres of childcare service providers within schools, health facilities and childcare institutions, as well as members of the judiciary on a range of child protection and psychosocial care issues.

As also reflected by my doctoral work, my current fieldwork and academic interests include transdisciplinary approaches to resolving complex problems, towards making systemic changes, in the context of the child protection, through engagement of stakeholders in the domains of child rights and protection, mental health, education and law. My thesis entitled “Understanding Intersectionalities in Psychosocial Well-Being & Justice —Transformational Processes in the Interface between Child Mental Health & Law”—for which I was awarded *cum laude*, focused on developing rights-based, child-centric, participatory and innovative methods for enhancing children’s interface with legal and mental health systems. This work also formed a basis for our development of India’s first child forensic training in areas of child sexual abuse and juvenile justice; subsequently, the Supreme Court issued a directive on utilizing one of the methodologies I developed—on mental health-informed and rights-based approaches to evaluating children in conflict with law for juvenile transfer.

A child rights and protection activist and professional, most of all, I am passionate about children...I love being with children...and writing stories and developing games for their safety, well-being and learning. My engagements with children, as well as with teaching and training, and the creative pedagogies that I enjoy developing and immersing myself in, are thus deeply informed and inspired by my many extracurricular interests, namely reading, music, theatre, art, film, culinary pursuits and my love for animals.

EDUCATION

2019-2024	PhD (awarded Cum Laude) Athena Institute of Transdisciplinary Sciences, Vrije University, Netherlands
2003-2004	MSc. Public Health in Developing Countries London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, London (UK)
1999-2001	M.A. Medical and Psychiatric Social Work Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India
1996-1999	B.A. English Literature Sophia College, University of Mumbai, India
2010	Course on Food Security & Nutrition in Emergencies Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, University of Tufts, Boston, USA
2007	Certificate Course in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bangalore, India

EMPLOYMENT

Adjunct Faculty, Chief Scientist & Head, PRATICRIA Initiative for Child Rights, Protection & Mental Health, School of Social Sciences, National Institute of Advanced Studies (1st September 2026—current)

Leader-Health, Azim Premji Foundation (September 2025—August 2026)

- Continued the work of the SAMVAD-NIMHANS child protection and mental health initiative, upon re-location to the Foundation.
- Development and implementation of training and capacity building programs for various cadres of child service providers and duty bearers.

Key Achievements

- ✓ Development of a new transdisciplinary training curriculum on child custody, for use with Family Court judges and counselors.
- ✓ Development of an integrated intervention package for reconciliation-informed child and adolescent mental healthcare for conflict-affected children in Manipur— offering a scalable, conceptually grounded blueprint for trauma-focused and reconciliation-informed, rights-based child and adolescent mental healthcare in contexts of armed conflict.

Technical & Operational Lead, SAMVAD (Support, Advocacy & Mental health interventions for children in Vulnerable circumstances And Distress), Dept. of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, National Institute of Mental Health & Neurosciences (NIMHANS), India (July 2020—May 2025)

- Development and initiation of SAMVAD, India's first national initiative & integrated resource for child protection, mental health, & psychosocial care.
- Development and implementation of child protection, mental health, education and law-related training and teaching curriculums/ programs.
- Roll out of the project's activities, including coordinate project activities including monitoring, review and reporting, and identifying and designing new initiatives for the project.
- Development and implementation of research and training and capacity building activities for child care service providers across the country
- Managing operations, namely human resource development, budgeting, financial planning and other support functions for project implementation.

Key Achievements

- ✓ Developed 14 training curriculums on various themes of child protection, mental health and law
- ✓ Led a team to train and capacitate a range of child care service providers, from teachers and school counselors to child protection functionaries, mental health service providers and judicial personnel— nearly 2,00,000 such service providers trained in India over the last five years.
- ✓ Led and developed state-level rapid assessments, to develop child protection policies.
- ✓ Developed India's first training curriculum and manual on forensic child sexual abuse—to integrate concerns from child protection, mental health and law perspectives.
- ✓ Developed child-rights based assessment methodologies for children in conflict with law, namely on juvenile transfer, that is now adopted by Supreme Court of India (for country-wide use).
- ✓ Designed cutting-edge research on child rights and protection, to address issues such as juvenile transfer, sexual consent amongst adolescents.

Project Coordinator, Community Child & Adolescent Mental Health Project, Dept. of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, National Institute of Mental Health & Neurosciences (NIMHANS), India (October 2014- March 2020)

- Initiation and management of community-based child & adolescent mental health services in government schools, pre-schools, primary healthcare centres and child care institutions
- Direct work with communities, through individual and group work services to children, parents, teachers, child care institution workers and government staff in schools, pre-schools, primary health care settings and child care institution.

- Creation of training material/manuals and implementation of training workshops for various stakeholders, including on-job training.
- Assessment and analysis of project data/information and development of strategies/ new initiatives for project implementation.
- Analysis and documentation of project processes through written reports and other forms, including development of educational/ learning materials generated during project implementation.
- Development of staff capacity and management/mentorship of staff/ teams (school teachers, pre-school teachers, health workers, child protection staff, judicial personnel) on child mental health issues, including management of emotional/ behaviour problems, developmental disabilities, loss/grief/ trauma/abuse and protection issues.
- Representation of the project in coordination meetings and academic forums as required.

Key Achievements

- ✓ Orientation, training and capacity building of over 1,500 child care service providers, judicial personnel, government and non-government staff across India and in SAARC countries.
- ✓ Contribution to review of Indian laws pertaining to children, including laws on juvenile justice and prevention of child sexual abuse.
- ✓ Development of life skills activity books for children and adolescents (in difficult circumstances).
- ✓ Development of 7 training manuals on psychosocial work with children in different contexts, including 2 for training of judicial officers on sexual abuse and children in conflict with the law.
- ✓ Development of a model for community-based child psychosocial interventions for replication in other parts of the country and elsewhere.

*Areas of interest and specialization: trauma and abuse work with children in difficult circumstances (including orphan/ abandoned/street/working/HIV infected & affected/war-affected/disabled and sexually abused children), life skills training for children/ adolescents, use of participatory/ experiential methods in teaching and training child care staff/ service providers; legal and policy level work in child sexual abuse, including forensic interviewing with children.

Emergency Program Manager, International Medical Corps, Syria (November 2012- February 2014)

- Identification of new projects, program and proposal development.
- Provision of technical assistance in primary health, rapid response, relief and rehabilitation programs for displaced/ war-affected and vulnerable populations.
- Data management, monitoring, evaluation and reporting.
- Program implementation in accordance with organizational mandates and donor policies.
- Liaison and coordination with government and other national and international partners & stakeholders.
- Human resource development, management, training and capacity building.
- Management of field teams, logistics and operations.

Key Achievements

- ✓ Development of staff training manual for working with conflict-affected children in Syria, including basic skill training and advanced modules on trauma and use of creative methods for children in difficult circumstances.
- ✓ Initiated child-focused protection and MHPSS training and interventions to address emergency child psychosocial care needs
- ✓ Conducted country-wide training programs on child protection and psychosocial care for children in conflict and difficult circumstances (including child abuse) for 70 child care/ protection staff, including NGO staff and Red Cross volunteers.
- ✓ Capacity building of agency staff: Training of trainers to conduct child protection and psychosocial care training programs.

- ✓ Initiated hygiene promotion programming for WASH Sector; developed of training manual on water, sanitation and hygiene promotion (WASH) programs for emergency-affected populations country-wide, including development of information education and communication materials.
- ✓ Conducted country-wide WASH trainings for 80 Red Cross/ NGO volunteers.
- ✓ Initiation of WASH team for IMC; capacity building of WASH trainer.
- ✓ Training and capacity building of IMC staff on Sphere Standards and working in conflict and disaster settings (in various technical areas—non-food item distribution; food security and nutrition, health and WASH).
- ✓ Provision of guidance to Emergency Health and WASH teams on under five health, particularly on (mal)nutrition and nutrition-hygiene issues in clinical and community settings.
- ✓ Initiation of community health education programs in IDP contexts.

**Public Health Promoter, WASH & Nutrition, Oxfam GB, East Africa
(August 2011- February 2012)**

- Analysis of causal factors for malnutrition and poor child health in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia during 2011-12 drought/ famine in East Africa.
- Identification of ways in which the causal analysis of malnutrition can influence public health interventions for most vulnerable groups in drought situations i.e. children under five.
- Development of community health strategies and programs integrating WASH, food security and child health interventions in drought situations.

Key Achievements

- ✓ Developed and implemented community participatory tools for data collection and analysis to examine WASH-malnutrition link in humanitarian settings in drought-affected/ famine-affected areas of Kenya and Somaliland.
- ✓ Analyzed and developed frameworks and models for understanding WASH-malnutrition link in emergency contexts. (Detailed documentation & papers developed).
- ✓ Designed context-specific WASH, child health and nutrition information, education and communication materials for use in the community.
- ✓ Staff capacity building and development of community participatory education manuals on WASH, malnutrition and child health.

**Consultant, Cholera Response Program, Plan International, Haiti
(November/ December 2010)**

- Provided technical support to the development and implementation of the cholera response strategy and program, particularly in the area of children.
- Developed the capacity of the staff, field teams and partner agencies in technical understanding relating to the response
- Supported the development of concept notes and provide reports on progress

Key Achievements:

- ✓ Development of 3 Emergency Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Training Manuals for: a) Community Health Workers and Hygiene Communities; b) Children; c) Early Childhood Care & Development Centers and Pre-Schools
- ✓ Design and development of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Survey for School Children, including methods and tools
- ✓ Development of cholera response program for Early Childhood Care & Development Centers (ECCD) with a focus on nutrition and hygiene through integration of ECCDs and (Mal)nutrition interventions

**Humanitarian Support Personnel—Public Health Promotion, Oxfam GB, Global
(October 2007- June 2009)**

- Work in multi-disciplinary teams, to initiate and respond to humanitarian and public health needs with a view to preventing communicable diseases and saving lives in emergencies and disasters.
- Lead rapid response programs through assessment, program planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes.

- Render technical support in the areas of water, sanitation, hygiene promotion including cross-cutting themes such as community participation & empowerment, gender and protection, HIV/AIDS.
- Train, lead and task manage organization staff to deliver appropriate health promotion interventions to vulnerable populations.

Assignment 1: Ethiopia (November 2007- January 2008)

- Public Health Promotion Coordinator in Cholera Prevention program SNNPR region: Leading teams to mobilize communities and train community health promoters and water committees in safe water, sanitation and hygiene practices, with emphasis on disease prevention and home-based treatment for children under five; development of monitoring tools and implementation of community household survey, data analysis, reporting and formulation of exit strategies
- Provided public health expertise in a multi-disciplinary team to conduct assessments and develop humanitarian programs in (i) Ethiopia-Eritrea border and (ii) militarized zones of Somali region, to alleviate chronic emergency conditions through protection of livelihoods and access to basic services, namely water and public health promotion.

Key Achievements:

- ✓ Staff capacity building on public health promotion, community mobilization and participation, gender, child-to-child approaches and monitoring issues.
- ✓ Conducted integrated assessment of WASH and food security as part of a multi-disciplinary team in militarized zones of Somali region, with a focus on under five health issues and how they are impacted by WASH and food security issues, making recommendations for interventions, to include immunization, nutrition and WASH/hygiene aspects of public health.

Assignment 2: Myanmar (June to October 2008)

Seconded to Save the Children, UK as Public Health Promotion Advisor on emergency Water, Sanitation and Hygiene program post cyclone Nargis:

- Directed development and implementation of emergency response and longer term program strategy ensuring Integration with food security & livelihoods, nutrition, health, education and livelihoods sectors to develop holistic humanitarian responses.
- Provided technical inputs to staff to promote learning based on emergency program strategies and activities, through innovative participatory methods and rigorous on-the job training in the field to improve program quality and encourage personnel development.
- Ensured continual monitoring and review of effectiveness, impact and direction of the public health promotion program; advised program managers on staff performance and management issues.

Key Achievements:

- ✓ Development of country strategy for Emergency WASH program across the cyclone affected regions.
- ✓ Development of comprehensive IEC/hygiene promotion materials covering safe water, disease transmission and food hygiene messages.
- ✓ Staff Training and Capacity Building of 78 WASH staff on rapid assessment tools and methods, vulnerability analysis, distribution of hygiene kits, water crisis assessment and analysis, PHAST methods, Basic methods on livelihoods analysis (linking water and livelihoods issues), monitoring/evaluation
- ✓ Assessment and strategic development of post-cyclone dry season water crisis and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) methods to mitigate crisis and elicit favorable donor responses for the same.
- ✓ Integration of emergency WASH assessments and interventions with Food Security & Livelihood, and Nutrition
- ✓ Detailed analysis and report, including program recommendations on 'Potential Dry Season Water Crisis' using a Food Security and Livelihoods framework for analysis

Assignment 3: Uganda (April-May 2009)

Technical Lead in WASH research project on piloting of hand-washing gadgets amongst displaced populations in Kitgum, Northern Uganda:

- Data analysis and development of technical report and recommendation for phase 1 of the study.
- Setting up phase 2--Streamlining data collection methods, coding and analysis
- Training of community volunteers

Key Achievement:

- ✓ Training and mentoring of staff in quantitative and qualitative research methodology.

Program Officer, International Medical Corps, Iraq

(September 2005 - February 2007)

- Advised and assisted the Country Director and other organization staff on all programmatic issues
- Provided technical leadership to health programs, namely, strengthening of primary health care systems, improving maternal and child healthcare services and community practices, gender and child psychosocial health issues through field assessments and application and adaptation of up to date international health strategies.
- Responsible for proposal development, program design, and implementation of emergency and post-conflict interventions focusing on displaced communities and vulnerable host population groups.
- Undertook all monitoring, evaluation and reporting tasks
- Designed and initiated a \$1.2 million program for 'Reintegration of Returnees through Community-Based Health Initiatives for Women' funded by Bureau of Population and Refugee Migration (BPRM).

Key achievements:

- ✓ Initiated a monitoring and evaluation unit for the country program: development of quantitative and qualitative tools; building staff capacity in basic field research methods.
- ✓ Initiated and guided an assessment on maternal health, designing surveys to elicit information on maternal and emergency obstetric care at community and primary health care facility level.
- ✓ Led the development and implementation of community-based health program for returnee women in southern Iraq; staff training and sensitization and introduction of gender concept into programming.
- ✓ Pioneered a women's status survey relating to issues of land & property rights, sexual and reproductive health, marital & domestic violence issues.
- ✓ Developed a paper on 'The Need for Child and Youth Psychosocial Interventions in Iraq' through research amongst the conflict-affected populations in Baghdad & displaced people's camps.

Coordinator, Psychosocial Care Program, Action Aid International, Sri Lanka

(March- August 2005)

- Initiated Psychosocial Programs in Tsunami and conflict affected areas of in south and east.
- Conducted rapid assessments in IDP camps on issues relating to basic needs, livelihoods and healthcare, including the assessing the need for mobile medical teams and the development of HIV/AIDS strategies for the country.

Key Achievements:

- ✓ Established community-based psychosocial care, with a special focus on children, through training of over 200 community workers and teachers.
- ✓ Developed a training manual on 'Child Psychosocial Health: Training for Teachers and Child Care Workers' containing a repertoire of creative methodologies and skills to work with disaster-affected children.

Social worker, International Medical Corps, Chad

(October 2004- February 2005)

- Established a community-based psychosocial program in 3 Darfur refugee camps.
- Provision of community-based training in child psychosocial health: understanding conflict-affected children's emotional concerns, abuse and protection concerns, common psychiatric disorders; introduction to practical skills to work with children and their families, using a range of creative techniques to facilitate children's expression and healing

Key Achievements:

- ✓ Training of over 200 community health workers, volunteers and teachers.

- ✓ Integration of child psychosocial interventions with education and primary healthcare system: initiation of recreational sessions in refugee camp schools; sensitization of community health workers.

**Psychiatric Social Worker & Research Assistant, Muskaan, Child and Adolescent Guidance Centre of Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India
(July 2001-2003)**

- Engaged in direct work with emotionally disturbed children and families, through use of creative therapeutic play methods.
- Developed research and documentation on the use of play and art forms in child mental health: traveled to various children's organizations in the country, using qualitative research methods to document creative play, art and drama techniques used with different types of vulnerable children
- Promoted awareness on child mental health through community education and awareness programs for schoolteachers.

Key Achievements:

- ✓ Integrated theory and practice by initiating experiments at the centre: re-vamping the playroom and materials to enable use of Virginia Axline's play therapy methods.
- ✓ Worked with disaster-affected children following political (communal) violence in Gujarat, using therapeutic methods of play and art to facilitate healing.

RESEARCH & PUBLICATIONS

- Ramaswamy, S, Ashok, S.S., Binu, V.S, Seshadri, S, Bunders-Aelen, J, Lokur, M. (Forthcoming) "How Child-Oriented is the Use of Judicial Discretion in Juvenile Transfer? - Implications for Rights-Based Child Protection Systems". The International Journal of Children's Rights.
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- Tikku, K., Ramaswamy, S., Sagar, K. J. V., & Seshadri, S. (2024). India's first child forensics training curriculum and manual on integrating interventions for legal and mental health dimensions of child sexual abuse. Asian journal of psychiatry, 101, 104212.
- Ramaswamy, S., Seshadri, S., & Bunders-Aelen, J. (2024). Transdisciplinary Approaches in Assimilating Power and Diversity to Address Children's Interface with the Law: A Case Study from India in In Regeer, B. J., Klaassen, P., & Broerse, J. E. What Is That Thing Called 'Transdisciplinarity for Transformation'? In Transdisciplinarity for Transformation: Responding to Societal Challenges through Multi-actor, Reflexive Practices. Cham: Springer International Publishing. Pp277-218
- Ramaswamy, S., Borah, S. K., & Seshadri, S. (2024). Rich Kids and Fast Cars: Re-aligning Perspectives on Protection and Mental Healthcare of Affluent Children in Conflict with Law. Journal of Indian Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Ramaswamy, S., Ashok, S. S., Seshadri, S., Mander, H., Bunders-Aelen, J., & Lokur, J. M. (2024). Criminalisation of Juvenile Justice: Questioning the Assumptions of Juvenile Transfer Laws in India. The International Journal of Children's Rights, 32(2), 409-446.
- Ramaswamy, Sheila; Kommu, John Vijay Sagar; Seshadri, Shekhar. Support, Advocacy, and Mental Health Interventions for Children in Vulnerable Circumstances and Distress: A Unique

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- Ramaswamy, S., Devgun, M., Seshadri, S., & Bunders-Aelen, J. (2023). “The Child Needs to Tell it to Me in Words”: Barriers and Facilitators to Witness Competencies in Child Sexual Abuse Trials. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, 31(2), 403-443.
- Ramaswamy, S., Devgun, M., Seshadri, S., & Bunders-Aelen, J. (2023). Balancing the law with children's rights to participation and decision-making: Practice guidelines for mandatory reporting processes in child sexual abuse. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, 81, 103464.
- Ramaswamy, S., Seshadri, S., & Bunders-Aelen, J. (2023). Transdisciplinary training for forensic mental health in child sexual abuse in India. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 10(5), 317-318.
- Ramaswamy, S., Sagar, J. V., & Seshadri, S. (2022). A transdisciplinary public health model for child and adolescent mental healthcare in low-and middle-income countries. *The Lancet Regional Health-Southeast Asia*, 3.
- Ramaswamy, S., Seshadri, S., & Bunders-Aelen, J. (2022). Shifting landscapes of global child mental health: Imperatives for transdisciplinary approaches. *Asian journal of psychiatry*, 69, 103002.
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- Ashok, S. S., Ramaswamy, S., Kulkarni, A., Singh, D., Quadros, D., Dzuwichu, K. J., ... & Seshadri, S. (2021). Responding to children's mental health, protection and psychosocial care concerns in the COVID crisis. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, 65, 102831.
- Krishna, C. G., Ramaswamy, S., & Seshadri, S. (2021). Integrating child protection and mental health concerns in the early childhood care and development program in India. *Indian pediatrics*, 58(6), 576-583.
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