



## COALITION FOR WORK WITH PSYCHOTRAUMA AND PEACE KOALICIJA ZA RAD SA PSIHOTRAUMOM I MIR

### MONTHLY REPORT DECEMBER 2019

*THIS REPORT ALSO IS AVAILABLE ON [HTTPS://WWW.CWWPP.ORG/MONTHLY-REPORTS.HTML](https://www.cwwpp.org/monthly-reports.html).*

#### **INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This month, Croatia held the first round of presidential elections, which were won by Zoran Milanović, the center-left candidate and Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, the right-wing candidate and current incumbent. While writing this report, the second round took place. Milanović won, against many expectations.

At the end of 2019, Croatia had met all requirements for entry into the Schengen Area. The country will take the European Union leadership for the six months beginning in January 2020.

The country has pledged to continue the system of prevention of people smuggling. This is clearly evidenced by the number of violent pushbacks that are taking place around all of its borders. These include incidents in which many people are killed and injured.

Further, it was formally announced that the RECOM initiative, intended to compile a joint list of victims of the wars of the 1990s, has failed.

We had five regular clients this month. The issues were the usual ones of abuse in childhood compounded by traumas of the war.

We had groups this month with students from the departments of political science and psychology of the University of Belgrade. They wish to work with migrants and are having the same issues that we are with regard to access.

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Further, we worked online with the group Snehalaya in India. This institution is working with the children of sex workers. Many of the children have HIV/AIDS. Although they are feeling people, the workers are uneducated in these fields, for the most part. The children have issues of abandonment and institutionalization. Capacity is low. They are working to set up a peer counseling program. This group is moving well.

The group from South Africa will resume in January.

We continued supervision with Alphonse Kanda and Ivan Maslow.

The migrant situation continues to deteriorate. The cold and wet weather is another factor making life miserable for people. There are continuous violent pushbacks by the police of all countries in the region, resulting in deaths and injuries to many people, including children. Conditions within the official camps are unhygienic, cold, and crowded. Outside the camps, the situation is even worse. We consider the current situation to be inhumane.

We continue contact with Advocates Abroad and No Name Kitchen.

No one is giving the migrants long-term psychological assistance, which we consider to be vital.

We feel extremely frustrated. We would like to work directly with the migrants, but do not have access to them, nor do we have the funds to set up offices in Serbia, Bosnia, and Greece, as we would like to do.

We have been revising the videos for the first Pragmatic Empowerment Training (PET) self-paced online course on the caregiver-client relationship and self-care. We expect these to be online early in the new year. We also have been writing the manual for the second PET course, namely that on communication.

This month, we mourned the death of Bobbi (Florence) Kendig who, together with her colleague Clara Lowry, founded Cedar House, one of the first programs for abused children in California. We will miss Bobbi personally and professionally.

This month we commemorated Human Rights Day and International Migrant Day.

We have had a small amount of contact with several groups in the DR Congo this month. We are attempting to work with people there, especially considering the very difficult psychological situation of many people there.

We attended the meeting of the Global Psychosocial Network (GPN) during which people spoke about the situations where they are.

During the coming months we will continue to work with clients, supervision, and groups. We will attempt to expand our contact with groups working with migrants and to gain access to both the migrants and those working with them. We will continue to work on the PET courses. We have started work on a document on the lessons learned during the 25 years of the existence of the CWWPP in a preliminary way and hope to bring out the document by the end of the year.

Internally, funding continues to be a challenge for us. We have heard that we will receive several small grants during the first days of 2020. With this, and the grant from our anonymous donor from the USA, we will survive into early 2021. However, this is a minimum amount that allows us to survive and does not allow us to expand into the kind of work in the field that we would like to do.

We hired an assistant to work on the videos for the first Pragmatic Empowerment Training (PET) course and to do administration, fundraising, and other tasks.

It is very clear that there is a great need for the work that we are doing. We see the PET courses and the migrant situation as our highest priorities. We are determined to continue to work in whatever ways we can.

### **THE STATE OF THE REGION**

This month, Croatia's tight presidential race went to a runoff after exit polls and initial returns indicated that none of the candidates had won the office outright.

With nearly 90% of the ballots counted, state election authorities in Croatia reported that the center-left politician Zoran Milanović led the first round of voting with nearly 30% support. President Kolinda Grabar Kitarović had almost 27%, followed by right-wing singer Miroslav Škoro in third place with around 24%. Škoro said in his address in his campaign headquarters that they had accomplished a miracle, and he thus hinted at his participation in the next parliamentary election. Milanović and Grabar Kitarović faced each other in a second round of voting on Jan 5, which was won by Milanović.

Recently, six people, including two children, disappeared in the Danube river while trying to cross from Serbia to Croatia. Between 10 and 15 people from the boat managed to swim back to the shore. It surprises us that we're not hearing of many more incidents like this.

At the end of 2019, a year in which Croatia met all the technical requirements to enter the Schengen Area, the Interior Ministry announced that, in 2020, it would continue communicating with the relevant services in the European Commission and the Council of the European Union. The Ministry

will continue to upgrade the system for the efficient prevention of people smuggling and irregular migration and cross-border crime. Croatia will take the EU leadership for the six months starting in January 2020.

A regional gathering of activists for the protection of human rights in Zagreb announced that RECOM, the regional fact-finding commission on victims of the 1990s wars in the former Yugoslavia, is a project that has politically failed.

Since 2006, RECOM has been trying to compile a joint list of victims without success due to political resistance to combining data on the circumstances of death. From that time, very little has been done with regard to positive peace and reconciliation. Unhealed war traumas and lack of restorative justice, together with poverty, corruption, and social injustice lead to transmission of trauma and have become fruitful ground for right wing politics.

We see that our work is necessary and, unfortunately, insufficiently recognized, and we continue in the belief and hope that positive changes will take place in the new year, not only rhetorically, but in terms of working on mental health as an integral part of the Millennium Goals.

## **EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

### Clients

We had five regular clients this month. The issues were the usual ones of abuse in childhood compounded by traumas of the war.

### Groups

The South Africa group says that they will resume in January.

The group with the students from the University of Belgrade is moving slowly. They still are having difficulties finding places to work with migrants. Yet, they are interested in the psychology and practical aspects of working with migrants, and with the background of these people.

A bright spot in this is the group with Snehalaya in India. They are enthusiastic and want us to continue to work with them. One set of issues is that of the abandonment that the children feel from their parents and from the workers in the institution. Another issue is the institutionalization of the children. Still another issue is their HIV/AIDS status. Further, there is a lack of capacity of workers within Snehalaya, creating large numbers of children to be cared for by each worker. Also, their level of education is relatively low. Thus, they need support. Also, Snehalaya is attempting to start a peer counseling program with the children and education for the workers. While these are having the expected teething issues, moving.

### Supervision

Supervision with Alphonse Kanda in South Africa and Ivan Maslow in Split continues.

### The Migrant Situation

The situation continues to worsen. It is cold and the migrants are outside to a large degree. Pushbacks continue to be violent in all countries. There are deaths and injuries.

As mentioned above, we have heard of a number of deaths and injuries in crossing the Danube from Serbia into Croatia. We suspect that there are many more. We also continually are hearing similar stories with regard to deaths and injuries in pushbacks from Croatia into Bosnia.

There is virtually no humanity in the way that governments are treating migrants.

We continue to work with No Name Kitchen and Advocates Abroad.

We feel extremely frustrated by this. We are very much aware of the need of migrants and those assisting them for psychological work. Yet, they are not getting it. We would like to set up offices close to the migrants but don't have the funds to do so.

### Pragmatic Empowerment Training (PET)

A new colleague has made progress revising the videos for the first course, namely that on the caregiver-client relationship and self-care. We expect her to finish these videos, and to put them online, by the end of February.

While we have gotten a few offers from online volunteers to work on the videos, none of these has worked out to date.

### Miscellaneous

This month, we heard by post of the death of our friend and colleague, Bobbi (Florence) Kendig. Bobbi, together with her colleague Clara Lowry, started the first program for abused children in California, a program known as Cedar House. A book about her experiences with Cedar House is available. Bobbi visited us in 2000 and has supported us professionally, financially, and personally over the course of many years. She was a Quaker. We will miss her deeply.

This month we commemorated Human Rights Day and International Migrant Day.

We have had a small amount of contact with several groups in the DR Congo this month. The situation there seems to be getting worse. There is much work for us there. The issue for us is the usual one of funding.

We attended the meeting of the Global Psychosocial Network (GPN) during which people spoke about the situations where they are. We would like GPN to get a serious migrant program underway.

We have written to Peace by Chocolate in Nova Scotia, which creates contacts with refugees who teach Arabic as a social enterprise. If they respond positively and if we have funds, we will work with them.

We have been fighting with Emerald Publishing of the UK for an electronic copy of the book in which we have a chapter. Very grudgingly and after much prodding, they gave us a method of downloading the book chapter by chapter. We find that work that will benefit people must be open source and not for profit.

## **INTERNAL AFFAIRS**

### **Introduction**

Fundraising continues to be a major challenge for us. With the contribution by our anonymous donor from the USA for 2020 and others, we will just about survive into 2021. Unfortunately, we will not be able to expand our work in the ways that we would like to.

### **Personnel**

This month, we hired an assistant. Her first duties are to work on the videos for the first Pragmatic Empowerment Training (PET) course, namely that on the caregiver-client relationship and self-care.

We very much would like to have more personnel and to open several offices, in particular for the migrant work. We cannot afford to do so at the moment.

### **Reporting**

In addition to this report, we have started to write our annual report. Because of the financial section of it and the receipt of end of year bills, that report will be finished in February or March.

All of this takes us away from what we consider to be our main important tasks.

## **PROSPECTS FOR THE COMING MONTHS**

During the coming months we will continue to work with clients, supervision, and groups.

We will attempt to expand our contact with groups working with migrants and to gain access to both the migrants and those working with them.

We will continue to work on the PET courses.

We will continue to attempt to start groups in Africa, online, at least.

We must continue to search for funding.

We have started work on a document on the lessons learned during the 25 years of the existence of the CWWPP in a preliminary way and hope to bring out the document by the end of the year.

**CONCLUSION AND EPILOGUE**

It is very clear that there is a great need for the work that we are doing. We are determined to continue in whatever ways we can. Certainly, we see the PET courses as making a contribution to increasing capacity in areas where there are few if any professionals and where there is little chance of obtaining training in other ways. We see the migrant situation as critical. We see the humanitarian aspect of it as being ignored. We feel very strongly that, if migrants do not get psychological assistance, there are large dangers for them and for the societies in which they are living.

Thus, 2020 will be a challenging year for us.