



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

MONTHLY REPORT FOR DECEMBER 2018

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

We have continued to work hard during December. Despite the holidays, we have too much to do to slow down. Thus, we have worked through the dark and the cold.

With regard to the situation in the region, several Serbs have been arrested for war crimes in the Vukovar area, increasing ethnic tension. There continues to be virtually no work on reconciliation. There also continues to be virtually no work on the psychological situation, which remains poor.

We have continued with clients and groups. The two groups that we have had this month are those from Split and Capoeira al-Shababi from Jordan. Both are relatively successful. We also are supervising two other therapists.

The migrant situation, both in the region and the world, continues to worsen. In Croatia and in the rest of Europe, people are being prosecuted – we say persecuted – for assisting asylum seekers. There is violence at the borders of the EU. In our case, that means at the borders of Croatia with Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Furthermore, ships have been seized. This also always is a difficult time of the year for migrants because of the weather.

Our view that we need someone in Belgrade full-time. At present, we do not have the funds to support that. This may be solved partially in the spring through cooperation with the University of Belgrade and perhaps other universities.

We also would like to have people in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Members of our group in Split are translating the first Pragmatic Empowerment Training (PET) course into Croatian. We urgently need people to translate it into the languages of the refugees.

We continue our contacts with Johannes Cornelius van Nieuwkerk.

Our contacts outside the region include those with Capoeira al-Shababi in Jordan, with Alphonse Kanda in South Africa, with an Evangelical Quaker Group in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo, and with others.

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We continue our contact with the Psychology for Peace group on Facebook. We anticipate an online meeting in January.

Importantly, we have been in contact with the University of Olomouc in the Czech Republic, where we will give parts of a class on development in the spring and may be involved in other ways.

We also are starting to work with the University of Belgrade. This may provide answers to working with the migrant situation in Serbia through the involvement of students. This also may provide students to work with other refugee groups in Serbia.

We took part the monthly meeting of the Global Psychosocial Network, of which we are a member, which, this month, focused on Gaza and on accompaniment.

We anticipate that the coming months will be challenging.

SITUATION IN THE REGION

After 27 years and after the State Attorney's failure to resolve war crimes, police in Vukovar have arrested several people suspected of war crimes. Serbs argue that this campaign, as well as the latest police procedures against members of the Serb community in the City of Vukovar and beyond, provoke fear and suspicion of a lack of impartiality in the indispensable investigation of unprocessed war crimes. The psychological situation in the region continues to be bad. There is virtually no work on it from any side, and it has become even worse. Despite visible efforts in reconstruction and development of the city infrastructure, with large amounts of funding going into this, the questions of reconciliation and peaceful life in dignity seem to be completely elusive and are being ignored, in our view intentionally, by the politicians.

EXTERNAL WORK

Clients, Groups, and Supervision

Clients

We had a number of constant clients this month. All have problems of abuse and neglect as children. There is a particular issue with fathers in virtually all cases. All also had issues of trans-generational transmission of trauma.

Groups

We have had two groups this month.

The first is a continuation of the Split educational/relatives group. They also are translating the first PET course into Croatian for us.

The second group is Capoeira al-Shababi in Jordan. The group has had issues with the Jordanian officials and may move to Palestine in the near future. We have begun the process of writing a proposal for cooperation with them. They seem to be very enthusiastic.

Supervision

We are supervising two other therapists/workers.

The Migrant Situation and Our Work

The migrant situation in Europe continues to worsen. The AreYouSyrious Facebook page and blog (<https://www.facebook.com/areyousyrious/>) give daily details. People are being prosecuted – better said, persecuted – for assisting refugees in a large number of places in Europe, including Croatia. For more information please see <https://medium.com/are-you-syrious/ays-special-when-governments-turn-against-volunteers-the-case-of-ays-5635bf786fa3>. MSF has stopped rescue operations in the Mediterranean and their ship, the Aquarius, has been seized.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, some housing for refugees has been closed and razed. Other facilities are poor. Most of the migrants are in the areas of Sarajevo and the northwest.

The weather throughout the region is very cold and there is snow in many places.

There is a great deal of violence at the borders of the EU. There are videos on YouTube of brutality by Croatian border guards.

There is virtually no psychological assistance being given to migrants anywhere.

The problems with gaining access to the official camps continue.

Another problem is that the migrants themselves are resistant to psychological work, as they feel that they will not stay in this region.

There is virtually no work on psychological assistance or psychological supervision going on either in this region or in the regions of origin.

Furthermore, there is little real work on integration going on, even in receiving regions. That work that is being done is top-down and most often does not respond to real needs.

We feel that, in order to do something effective in Belgrade, where we have been going for a few hours per week, we need to be there full-time. In this direction, we are working on a plan for internships with students from various departments at the University of Belgrade other universities.

We are attempting to find funds for this work.

We have had a small amount of contact with the Dutch group called *We Gaan Ze Halen (We're Going to Get Them)*. At Christmas, this group went to bring a group of 150 migrants from Greece to The Netherlands. Although they got quite a bit of publicity around the world, they were unsuccessful.

PET

As indicated above, we are in the process of having the first course translated into Croatian. We are appealing for translation into French, Arabic, Pashtu, Farsi, Urdu, and other languages. We need funds for this purpose.

We are expecting to start work on the second course, that on interpersonal and group communication, in the new year.

Contacts

We continue our contact with Johannes Cornelis van Nieuwkerk and Refival. Hans has excellent ideas about integration and about dealing with the migrant situation in general. Again, we refer to his websites, <http://www.informationphilosophy.com> and <http://www.a1216.refival.org>.

We also continue our contact with Alphonse Kanda, who is working in the Johannesburg area of South Africa. One of the things that we would like to do in the new year is to start a substantive program with him for various caregivers in rural and urban settings there.

Further, we continue our contact with Gwyneth Hamman-Jones and the Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/psych4peace/>. A meeting to work on the psychology of migration is planned for sometime in January. We would ask anyone interested to contact Gwyneth.

We also have been in contact with Selma Porobić at the University of Olomouc in the Czech Republic. Charles Tauber will give a number of online seminars for them in the spring. We also may work with them in other ways. We have spoken about internships for students, mentoring students, and accreditation of the PET program. They get students from a variety of places. This also may assist with our personnel programs.

Further, Charles visited the University of Belgrade. We are in the process of working out a plan for cooperation for internships for students with migrants, refugees who still are in Serbia since the war, and others. We are talking about long-term and short-term courses and about accreditation. Once this program has been worked out, it will start in March 2019.

We also continue to work with the Evangelical Quaker Church in Bukavu, Congo on a pilot proposal for work there.

Miscellaneous

As a follow-up to the seminar on the psychology of Holocaust victims for students of McGill University in Montréal that he gave last month, Charles Tauber wrote a short summary of what he covered. A small group of students have said that they wish a follow-up series. Charles will start that in the new year.

The Global Psychosocial Network (GPN; <http://www.globalpsychosocial.org>) meeting in December concentrated on Gaza and further discussed the concept of accompaniment, that is, people standing by others who are in difficulty. In the case of our work, this, means professionals and lay counselors and others being with and assisting those with psychological difficulties and empowering them in whatever way possible.

Further, Charles has been invited to write an article for the Dutch Quaker journal, De Vriendenkring.

We have had contact with GivingWay with regard to recruiting volunteers. We revised our profile somewhat to reflect what we really wish from volunteers. We also are on the lists for volunteers of several other organizations.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Introduction

The largest issue that we face internally is that of finding funds to support our current programs and those which we would like to carry out in the future. Our largest expense in this sense is personnel.

Fundraising

This month, we received a grant from the Evangelical Church of St. Gallen, Switzerland. We also received the remainder of the contribution for 2018 of the Dutch Quaker Assistance Fund.

Other Financial Issues

As soon as we have paid the bills for December, we will be able to prepare the annual financial report for 2018. We expect it to be finished by about the first of March.

PROSPECTS FOR THE COMING MONTHS

Externally, one of our greatest challenges is the migrant work. We hope that the university contacts and increased funding efforts will assist in having sufficient personnel to do more. We also wish to work more in this region.

Further, we wish to do considerably more in translating the Pragmatic Empowerment Training (PET) program into self-paced online courses.

CONCLUSIONS AND EPILOGUE

We are working hard. We see the coming year as being challenging and exciting.