



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

MONTHLY REPORT APRIL 2019

INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are several large challenges facing us now. One is the migrant situation in the region. Another is the internal funding situation. Otherwise, things continue more or less as usual.

The situation in the region remains difficult. The exodus from Croatia to elsewhere in the European Union continues. Schools are closing because of a lack of pupils. The US State Department Annual Report on the state of human rights in Croatia cites violence targeting migrants and journalists, threats towards ethnic minority groups, corruption, the issue of missing persons from the 1991-1995 war, and women's inequality. As is usual in our reports, we note that the psychological status of people in this region is not good. Nothing is being done about the serious traumatization, including the trans-generational transmission that is reaching into the current generation.

Work with clients, groups, and supervision is proceeding as usual. We continue to see issues related to psychological, physical, and sexual abuse that people endured as children as well as trans-generational transmission of trauma. Both of these now are producing a wide variety of issues.

With regard to the migrant situation, we are continuing to see violence, with police pushing people back and abusing of migrants. Such abuse also is being carried out by smugglers and others. Governments and inter-governmental organizations continue to obstruct access to official camps by non-governmental organizations. Volunteers, who try to do their best, are for the most part untrained and psychologically unsupervised. There is little if any psychological work with the migrants themselves. We continue to work with the SOS Team Kladaša and No Name Kitchen online and in person in Šid and Velika Kladaša. Regrettably, we do not have funding to obtain the staff that we would need to do the kind of work that we would like to do.

We now have agreed to give seminars to students at the Universities of Osijek, Belgrade, and Olomouc (Czech Republic). Those in Belgrade will be a series.

We had a visual presentation for the InPACT conference in Zagreb at the beginning of May accepted and is available on our website, as was an article for the May issue of the *Vriendenkring*, the Dutch Quaker monthly magazine.

<p>Mission to Croatia M. Držića 12 32000 Vukovar Croatia Tel and Fax: +385-32-441975 Website: www.cwwpp.org E-Mail: cwwppsummer@gmail.com</p>	<p>Office in The Netherlands c/o Kupers Ds. S. Tjadenstraat C81 9663 RD Nieuwe Pekela The Netherlands Tel: +31-597-645790 Fax: +31-597-647029 e-mail: pabbv@telfort.nl</p>
--	---

We commemorated the day of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, Earth Day, and Landmine Awareness Day.

With regard to funding, we still are uncertain how we will survive into 2020. We have sent out several proposals this month.

We see the coming months as very challenging.

SITUATION IN THE REGION

As the spring is coming, an increasing number of migrants are arriving in Bosnia and Herzegovina using the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes. Croatia is adhering to the Schengen membership criteria and is absorbing large amounts of EU funding not to assist migrants in a humanitarian manner but to control illegal migration. Croatia used 120 million Euros in EU funds to strengthen the EU's external border, and for Frontex aircraft, which are based in Zadar, to monitor the entire region of Southeast Europe for illegal migration. Also, 6 500 police have been deployed along the border to prevent illegal migration. Collective, unlawful, and violent push-backs of refugees on the Croatian borders have continued, despite consistent warnings by numerous international and domestic organizations, representatives of the Center for Peace Studies, Are You Serious?, the Welcome Initiative, and the Italian Consortium of Solidarity (ICS). Many migrants were given a "Croatian welcome", which, according to numerous testimonies, included brutal beatings with truncheons, punching and kicking, stripping refugees naked, taking their water and food supplies, threatening them with weapons, shooting, theft and destruction of refugees' personal items, and illegal and violent push-backs of families, minors, and sick and elderly people. The president of Croatia, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, also has made disparaging remarks about the motives of migrants for leaving their home regions.

In Slavonia, that is, eastern Croatia, according to Ministry data, schools remained without 18 877 students in six school years. In comparison, in Istria County, there were only 46. Therefore, the toughest task fell on the founders (local communities) of Slavonia, who have to make decisions that will affect entire towns and villages, which are already empty due to negative sociopolitical conditions. According to the US State Department Annual Report on the state of human rights in Croatia, violence targeting migrants and journalists, threats towards ethnic minority groups, corruption, the issue of missing persons from the 1991-1995 war, and women's inequality remain as problems in Croatia.

Generally speaking, the importance of mental health and wellbeing is still undervalued and stigmatized. There has been very little change in the psychological state of people in the period that we have been in the region. We repeat each month that we are the only organization in the region offering assistance with psychological traumatization without charge.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Introduction

Clients, groups, and supervision continued as usual, with the usual issues. As mentioned in the section on the situation in the region, the migrant situation continued to worsen. We are doing what we can online in Velika Kladuša and Bihač in Bosnia and in person and online in Šid in Serbia. It is not enough by a long shot, and we feel very frustrated by it. We also are frustrated by the attitudes of institutions toward the humanitarian and human needs of migrants. Further, we are attempting to set up groups in South Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Uganda. We now have dates in May on which Charles will give seminars at the Universities of Osijek, Belgrade, and Olomouc (Czech Republic), this last online. Further, our virtual presentation for the InPACT conference in Zagreb early in May was accepted. We also will have an article on Šid and Kladuša published in the Quaker Monthly magazine, de Vriendenkring. We commemorated the day of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, Earth Day, and Landmine Awareness Day.

Clients

This month, we had seven clients. The issues with which they came were the ones with which we continually are working, that is, psychological, physical, and sexual abuse of people as children, who now are adults, and the resulting issues of self-image, depression, anger, and anxiety, among others. These issues, if not dealt with, give rise to powerlessness and sometimes to reactive psychosis. We also are working with a substantial amount of trans-generational transmission of trauma.

Split Group

One family is responding well to treatment by Ivan Maslow. There were many difficult anniversaries in April for a number of people. Further, the group discussed further setting up a plan for a coalition with groups such as the police and social services to deal with emergencies.

Supervision

Alphonse Kanda

The work continues roughly every two weeks. Alphonse is extremely busy with clients, students and his masters thesis in medical anthropology. Our conversations show the similarities between the situation here and that in South Africa. Further, as indicated elsewhere in this report, Alphonse has found two groups of people with whom we might have education/supervision groups online.

Ivan Maslow

Supervision continues. Ivan is working further with a small number of clients, most of whom were psychologically and/or physically and/or sexually abused as children. There also is a substantial amount of trans-generational transmission in his practice. He and his wife also continue to work with the commune for drug addicts near Split. They now will make a cd.

The Migrant Situation

The migrant situation continues to worsen. Our prediction is that it will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

We still have had no success in getting contact with people in Croatia. At the end of the month, President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović made disparaging comments about refugees and migrants.

We continue to work with the SOS Team Kladuša (SOSTK) and No Name Kitchen (NNK) in Velika Kladuša and Bihač in Bosnia online. Notably, Charles has given therapy to several people. We continue to hold weekly meetings with the volunteers. The group members are having the problems that would be expected, namely burnout, frustration, and over-involvement with clients. Further, the situation in that region is being affected because of European Union and IOM policy which, in our view, encourages the brutality of the police on all sides of the borders and creates unlivable and unhumanitarian conditions for the migrants.

In April, we started going to Šid, on the Serbian-Croatian border, about 30 km from Vukovar, every Monday, working with volunteers from NNK. The situation there also is not at all good. Many migrants are living in tents in a “squat”, that is, a destroyed factory without a roof. NNK provides a generator for lighting and charging telephones. They also provide water for drinking and hygiene, and washing clothes. The squat is run by a mafia-like hierarchy of smugglers. The residents are young men, up to about 30 years old. Further, recently, new groups of migrants from North Africa have arrived. They are having some disputes with the people from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and Iran who already are there. It is very clear that the migrants are having severe psychological issues. No one is assisting them, although the volunteers try. We have begun to give the volunteers psychological supervision and education which they have not had until now. Most stay for short periods of time. We will try to find migrants who wish a similar group. This also is very difficult because of the language and cultural barriers. We also are doing a limited amount of work with them online. We are not satisfied with the situation.

With regard to both Kladuša/Bihač and Šid, we would like to find funds to have at least one or two people doing psychological work with the migrants and with the volunteers, as well as language and cultural interpreters. We would like those people to be there for at least 40 hours per week. There seems to be no funding available for that.

Further, we have received an inquiry about training from a group of volunteers working with migrants on the borders of Montenegro.

Also, please see the paragraph on our projected seminars with the Universities of Osijek and Belgrade.

Possible Work Outside the Region

This month, we continued work on the Bukavu project with the Quaker Evangelical Church. We offered to do work without cost online. Also, the Reverend Samuel Muderhwa and the Peace and Reconciliation Project became part of the group working on the project.

Alphonse Kanda came through with two groups that want training and supervision in South Africa, one a church group working in the townships and a group of former prisoners. We have yet to meet them.

We met with a group of youth working in Uganda near the Kenyan border. We had one meeting with them on Skype. They have said that they would get one or more groups together.

Work with Universities

We will give a seminar for the students of the Department of Psychology at the University of Osijek on 7 May 2019. We have written notes for the seminar, which are available on <https://www.cwwpp.org/osijek-seminar-7-may-2019.html>. We think that these notes may be useful for other purposes.

We also have agreed to start a series of onsite and online seminars for the Departments of Psychology and Political Science of the University of Belgrade on 16 May to prepare them for possible internships with migrants. Please watch the website and the Facebook page for notes from those seminars.

Additionally, we will give two seminars online for the University of Olomouc in the Czech Republic on 22 and 29 May. Again, we will have notes on the website.

Miscellaneous

A virtual presentation for the InPACT conference in Zagreb from 2-4 May has been accepted. It is available on the website and at <http://inpact-psychologyconference.org/virtual-presentations/>. The proceedings for the conference are available on http://inpact-psychologyconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/InPACT-2019_Book-Proceedings.pdf.

An article on our work in Šid and Bihač/Kladuša will appear in the *Vriendenkring*, the Dutch Quaker magazine in May. An English version is available upon request.

We remembered, on Facebook, the day of the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Earth Day (Charles participated in the first one in 1970), and Landmine Awareness Day. Landmines still are a huge issue here.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

The basic internal issue continues to be financing. Otherwise, while there have been a number of small issues, there has been nothing major this month. Because of the funding issue and the lack of volunteers, Sandra and Charles are overworked.

EPILOGUE

April was a difficult month for us. We expect that the coming months will be even more so. The situation with migrants and those assisting them is a high priority for us, and also is extremely frustrating. We have no easy answers.