



## THE PHILOSOPHY AND VISION OF OUR WORK

There are a number of points in our philosophy and vision of our work that we think make it distinct.

The CWWPP sees the empowerment of people to take responsibility for and initiative in their own lives in their own environments as the most important pillar of our work.

We believe that work on psychological traumatization is crucial in recovery/ social integration/ regeneration. We are all too aware of how such traumatization affects people's ability to function, that is, at work, in families, and in their social environments.

We are aware that trauma and narratives are transmitted between generations for hundreds of years and can thus be a trigger for radical action. For these reasons, it is essential that people find a place to deal with the traumatic events that they have experienced, in the prevention of further violence and in the field of the transformation of conflicts. The earlier that traumatization is treated, the easier it is to treat and the greater the effectiveness of the treatment. While these issues are extremely important for children and young people, they also are large factors in how adults react to the world around them.

We believe in the need for people to take initiative and responsibility in their own lives. Accordingly, one of our roles is to empower them. Destigmatization of mental health issues and removal of taboos of mental health are extremely important in these processes (see elsewhere on this website).

Furthermore, there are physical reactions to traumatic experiences and we believe that it is essential that the two be worked on together.

We believe that talking therapies are far more effective than medication in work with trauma. In a very limited number of cases, medication can be used as an adjunct to other types of therapy for limited periods of time. It does not solve the problems. Rather, people easily can become addicted to many of the medications that are commonly prescribed. This all too frequently creates even more problems for the person.

We do not believe that "experts" have all the answers, especially in areas where there is low capacity of therapists and peacebuilders. Accordingly we believe in training "barefoot" therapists and peacebuilders. Professional therapists from outside of the region often initially have significant difficulty understanding the unique cultural aspects of the affected population. Thus the quality of the assistance that a barefoot therapist can give is more targeted, and is experienced as more relevant than that of any externally placed professional mental health therapy services. As such, it is more trusted, feels more natural, and is therefore likely to actually be utilized, with less stigma, avoiding many of the taboos of seeking mental health care that may infiltrate the culture.

We believe that, with adequate supervision (see elsewhere on this website), in many if not most cases, barefoot therapists can relate to their own peers better than "professionals". There are, of course, a number of provisos to this. The first is that education and supervision are adequate and continuing. The second is that barefoot workers know their limitations and know when to refer. However, we see this as at least one solution to the severe problems of capacity in these fields.

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We believe that development of modern IT technology can increase capacity. Thus, we believe in online education and counseling. We realize that onsite personal work is superior, but see working with these means as a way of filling gaps. Equally important, we see such means as the Internet as a way of people interacting about their experience and sharing their knowledge.

The CWWPP believes in long-term involvement. While we see short-term workshops and other programs as useful in the context of wider programs, we very rarely see them as having sustainable results. We have been in the Western Balkans since 1995 and expect to be in the region for the foreseeable future. We see this as applicable to virtually all regions.

It is better for people to work from the bottom up rather than be dictated to from the top down. This involves incorporation of their own narratives at micro and macro levels. These levels are:

- ▶ the individual;
- ▶ the family;
- ▶ the group;
- ▶ the neighborhood;
- ▶ the community;
- ▶ the region;
- ▶ the global level.

The CWWPP as a grass root organization works at the first four levels. We believe that work at all levels needs to be carried out in parallel. We believe that it is not effective to work on one aspect of recovery/ integration/ regeneration in isolation. Rather, we believe in integrated programs dealing with the wide range of challenges that are being faced in an area. In this context, we also do not believe that one organization can work alone. Rather, we believe in coordination between organizations, each with its own expertise and perspective.

We believe in treating anyone who comes to us, regardless of ethnicity, religion, race, sexual orientation, but recognize that we cannot assist everyone with whom we would like to work. Thus, we strongly believe in the formation of alliances, and networks that are between regions internationally and locally. We think that the sharing of experience and knowledge is crucial.

As a pacifist organization we do not believe in the use of violence for any purpose, nor do we believe in punishment using violent means. Restorative justice rather than punitive justice, with rehabilitation and social integration, have far better effects than punishment. This, of course, frequently takes far more creativity and work than "simple" punishment.

Clearly, dealing not only with psychological aftermath of the war but the underlying conflicts that preceded them is an essential part of the post-violence healing process. Thus, through training, group interaction and supervision, the barefoot therapist learns to confront these underlying conflicts and thereby becomes an essential vehicle of the war-to-peace transitional justice fabric. In essence, the barefoot therapist serves as a mediator of restorative justice, an essential component of all post-conflict social reconstruction.

*Our vision* is one in which conflicts, which we believe to be useful on many occasions, would be solved by peaceful means. Where violent conflict occurs, we our vision is one in which compassion and empathy are the guiding principles of assistance.