

Psychosocial Support to Groups of
Victims of Human Trafficking in
Transit Situations

Including papers by:

Idit Albert and Ines Santos

Sue Jennings

Nada Polovina

Guglielmo Schinina'

Diana Tudorache

NGO Piccolo Principe

NGO For A Happy Childhood

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PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT
TO GROUPS OF VICTIMS
OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING
IN TRANSIT SITUATIONS

Psychosocial Notebook, Vol. 4, February 2004



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Edited by
Guglielmo Schinina'

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Preface

The publication of the Forth volume of the Psychosocial Notebooks series is an important and pleasant event for me for different reasons. I am extremely glad about the quality of the papers and the relevance of the issues raised. Yet, this notebook also represents a multi-faceted leap forward in a wider perspective. On the one hand, it is the product of many years of interdisciplinary work, a demonstration that the methodology and work philosophy described in the first three notebooks, have been positively acknowledged by other service areas of our organization and have also played a role in enriching their work. On the other hand, this publication highlights the importance of considering the psychosocial approach not merely as a confined professional domain, but as a possible - and perhaps indispensable - component of a variety of programs and interventions for mobile populations.

As illustrated by the papers included in this notebook, psychosocial components have been developed within many anti trafficking projects of IOM in different parts of the world over the past few years. Psychosocial components have also been included in activities related to labor migration or soldiers' demobilization. I am sure that amalgamations of this kind could be experimented in other sectors.

The series of Psychosocial Notebooks is and will continue to be open to contributions on examples of such amalgamations to give visibility to these new realities of work.

Natale Losi

Head of the Psychosocial & Cultural Integration Unit, IOM

Introduction

'In Between...' Working with Survivors of Trafficking in Transit Situations

An Introduction

By Guglielmo Schinina*

Past, Present, and Future

Several months ago, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Mission in Skopje prepared a booklet to distribute to women temporarily residing in the Transit Center for Foreign Victims of Trafficking in the Republic of Macedonia, which contained basic information about the shelter, its rules, and staff. In order to be more inclusive, the women staying in the Center were asked to design a logo, describing the shelter, and symbolizing their perception of it. One of their drawings was then displayed on the cover page of the booklet.

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The women drew various types of pictures. A few referred to the theme of the 'group' and the solidarity between women. Some represented the concept of house and home. However, the majority of these drawings referred to the concept of waiting. The victims represented it through watches, hour-glasses, and sundials. Very often the representations were dramatic; the watches conveyed a sense of loneliness, frustration, and coldness. In a few cases, the concept of waiting was mixed with one of comfort, for example in the depiction of a cuckoo clock that was subsequently selected for inclusion in the booklet. Indeed it described how we, the staff and administrators of the center, would like the women to perceive it: a comfortable place where one has to wait, but can do so in a relaxed, productive, and safe environment.



The women sheltered in the Transit Centre are all foreigners, trafficked to Macedonia or via Macedonia, mostly for the purpose of sexual exploitation. They were lured by with false promises of employment, marriage, and better life conditions, but were instead forced into slavery, deprived of their documents and freedom of movement, and coerced into prostitution or unpaid labor.

They were often subject to psychological and physical violence. When they arrive at the Transit Centre, their psychological conditions are critical and, in some cases severely traumatised, as better described in the papers of Diana Tudorache and the NGO, “ For A Happy Childhood” that can be found in this notebook.

Macedonia is not their home country (i.e. their place of origin) nor it is the destination they presumed they would reach when they originally departed; thus, it is considered a “transit country”; a half way station along the terrible path they have endured. As a result, the victims of trafficking do not feel safe in Macedonia, since it is the location where many of their horrific experiences have occurred. All of the victims of trafficking sheltered in the Transit Centre thus far have wanted to return home, to their countries of origin, as soon as possible, with the goal of staying there, or immigrating to some western country via legal and “regular” means. They perceive their stay in the Transit Center as a delay before the “real rescue” and the achievement of a safer space. The “real rescue” and safer space cannot be found, according to them, anywhere other than in their home countries or in Western Europe, that is, if it can be found at all. This perception is mostly psychological. The victims will face, in their countries of origin, situations of extreme poverty, serious family problems, social stigmatization, as well as security issues. Moving to Western Europe will be difficult and put them at risk of being re-trafficked. Even if they succeed, the process of adaptation will be very hard. Helping the women to bridge the gap between their perceptions of the future with the realities they face is one of the primary aims of the assistance provided in the Transit Center, as important as the first re-elaboration of the traumatic experiences they faced in the past.

A Transit Center for Foreign victims of trafficking is a transitional experience in between the hell of abuse, exploitation, slavery and violence, and the presumed heaven upon return to the home country. Any kind of assistance provided in a Transit Center, from medical to legal, from psychological to vocational, has to consider this “transitional” issue, which has symbolic as well as practical implications.

The psychosocial assistance provided to victims of trafficking in a Transit Center has to deal, in particular, with the trauma provoked by past experiences and the expectations for life in the future and its accompanying problems. The present, which is usually the center of psychosocial work, plays a very different therapeutic role in this setting. Indeed the present is a suspended time, a time in which action is limited, de-contextualized and fictional, but also a time which gives space for reflection, re-elaboration, preparation, training and projection.

The Transit Center for Foreigner Victims of Trafficking

Before continuing further, for purposes and ease of clarity, we will offer a general overview of the entire IOM Return and Reintegration Program and the functioning of the Transit Center (henceforth referred to as the T.C.). This will help to contextualize the experience, and frame the psychosocial workshops, which we present later in this volume, into the wider program of assistance.



The Transit Center for Foreign Victims of Trafficking in the Republic of Macedonia was opened in April 2001. In the years since then, it has hosted more than 700 foreign victims of trafficking: women only, including female minors. The minimum stay in the T.C. is three weeks, which is the time needed for issuing travel documents, making travel arrangements and

designing proper reintegration programs. Victims of trafficking often stay there longer, because their presence in the country is deemed necessary for investigative and judicial purposes, for medical reasons, or because the conditions do not exist for a timely, safe return trip home.

The Republic of Macedonia's Ministry of the Interior manages the T.C. through two police departments: the Anti-Organized Crime Department and the Department for Foreigners and Immigration Issues. IOM provides direct assistance to the victims, including medical care, legal aid, the provision of food, clothing, personal hygienic items, and psychosocial and vocational training, either directly or through local NGOs.

The T.C. is comprised of two large sleeping rooms, one smaller sleeping room dedicated to minors and particularly vulnerable cases, a big kitchen-living room and a common space. It can host up to 35 women and is guarded 24 hours a day by the Macedonian Police. The freedom of movement of the victims sheltered in the T.C. is limited for their own security. External visitors have to ask permission from the Ministry of the Interior to access the Center, while judicial and investigative units can access the T.C. and interview the women at any time.

A doctor is present every day at the T.C. and two nurses are there during the night for emergencies. Pregnancy tests, gynecological examinations, TB tests and general check-ups are offered to the women on a strictly voluntary basis. Whenever a woman is in need of specialized care, a qualified professional follows her case. Regrettably, some women arrive at the T.C. with significant physical trauma, including broken legs and gunshot wounds and need surgical attention, rehabilitation and hospitalization. These individual cases are transferred to local health institutions.

Many women present in the T.C. are interviewed by the police and asked to testify in court. Often, women are kept in the T.C. for long periods because of this reason. Most of the women assisted thus far have never been summoned and have been kept very poorly informed by the police and judicial officials regarding their situation, the possible follow-up needed, the length of their stay in Macedonia, etcetera. This level of uncertainty is so great that women have begun to perceive the T.C. as an unsafe space. Therefore, to counteract these misperceptions a legal assistance program has been established. As soon as they arrive at the T.C., the women are provided with a booklet, written in their native languages, explaining their legal and administrative status, as well as their rights and obligations. Whenever a woman is brought to court, a lawyer is appointed to follow the case, as is consistent with current legislation. General legal counseling ses-

sions are run once per week in the T.C. and a female lawyers organization researches the shortcomings and gaps in the existing legislation, with particular regard to children and especially vulnerable cases.

The overall assistance program provided to trafficked victims focuses primarily on their psychosocial rehabilitation. The psychosocial assistance currently provided in the Transit Center consists of:

Direct Assistance: Three teams, comprised of a social worker and a psychologist, are available at the T.C. 12 hours per day. They organize the daily activities in the Center and follow the daily psychosocial, as well as practical needs of the women.

Individual Counseling: A female psychologist, with a major in family therapy, visits the Center twice a week for individual counseling and is always available on call for emergencies.

Therapeutic Workshops: Every day, a one-hour group therapy workshop takes place. It focuses on practical matters, awareness of different themes, and is tailored according to the needs of the women. The elaboration of this workshop was the primary aim of the training described in this volume.

Vocational Trainings and Recreational Activities: Every day, a two-hour long vocational training or recreational activity takes place. The vocational trainings have included: tailoring, hairdressing, cosmetics and English language classes. The recreational-training sessions have consisted of Art therapy and Yoga.

Special Care for Minors: A special program is tailored to meet the needs of minors, according to the relevant UNICEF guidelines.

Health Education: An HIV-AIDS and drug prevention program is run every month in the T.C. It consists of four weekly sessions, each of which lasts two hours.

The plan outlined above is further described in the paper by the NGO, "For A Happy Childhood".

The women are also included in IOM's Return and Reintegration Program on a voluntary basis. In coordination with the IOM missions in their countries of origin, a safe and dignified return home is granted to the victims and reintegration packages, including scholarships, grants, vocational trainings, medical and psychological assistance, small enterprise development, or ad hoc actions are designed and implemented for them.

Psychosocial Assistance-Problems

When the training we are about to describe started initially the plan of psychosocial support in the T.C. was different. At first, the psychosocial assistance provided in the Centre was limited/constrained by the Centre's transitional profile, and in some instances this remains the case. The main problematic issues can be summarised as follows:

1. Victims remain in the Centre for a limited period of time. The minimum residence in the shelter is three weeks. As a consequence, no mid-term or long-term therapeutic paths, nor any midterm or long-term vocational trainings or capacity building training can be initiated.

2. Victims stay longer only for special medical and security reasons or when they are requested to collaborate with the police and the judiciary. The victims who stay longer are therefore subject to increased levels of stress and require specialized care and "ad hoc" counselling and vocational paths.

3. The group members vary in age, place of origin, and background.

4. Victims arrive at the shelter separately, on different days, and the length of their residence/stay in the shelter varies from case to case.

5. The preceding points #1, 2, 3, and, 4 make it very difficult to work with the group in a progressive way, since the groups are rarely fixed. Ways to work with such groups, whose members vary from day to day, with the frequent presence of newcomers and the departures of others, had to be found.

6. The victims are often taken out of the shelter for investigative and judicial reasons or interviewed in the Transit Centre without prior notice. This makes it very difficult to create the feeling of a safe space.

7. The women's mother tongues are different from the therapists' ones.

8. The women are given very little or no information about the reason why they are kept longer than the standard amount of time in the Transit Centre, the judicial implications of their extended stay, and the expected duration of their prolonged residence. This, linked with the women's desire to return to their countries of origin as soon as possible, can make the experience in the T.C. re-traumatising.

9. The lack of a safe structure makes it even more important to find reproducible models, formats of care and a precise approach, to create a sense of a safe space for the elaboration experiences, and to include all of these dimensions into a ritualised framework.

In designing the trainings and series of actions required to enhance the psychosocial capacity of the staff working in the Transit Centre, we identified six primary needs of the victims that should be professionally addressed:

1. Ritualization of the victims' time,
2. The affective appropriation of the space by the residents,
3. Relaxation,
4. Self-esteem,
5. Re-elaboration of the traumatic experience,
6. Preparation for reintegration in the country of origin.

Moreover, it soon became apparent to our staff that the assistance of victims of trafficking has strong social and human rights implications. The police and the judiciary often perceive the Transit Centres as facilities for housing witnesses and collecting information from them, rather than safe spaces for their rehabilitation. The management of the shelter has an approach that is investigation-oriented. Everyone understands the importance of the fight against organized crime in the overall effort to combat trafficking in human beings. Nevertheless, a T.C has to be, first and foremost, a safe space for women and the best interest of the women sheltered there must always serve as the basis of any action. The focus should not be on what serves victims of trafficking generally, but what is in the best interest of the specific individual, at that specific moment in time. Therefore every psychosocial action, in order to be effective, has to address the victim's human rights, take logistical conditions into account, provide complete information to the woman about her rights and obligations, and serve her advocacy during all stages of assistance. We tried to incorporate these points into our approach and asked the NGOs working under the "IOM umbrella" to act, not only as service providers, but also as advocacy promoters.

Psychosocial Assistance-Actions

The issues mentioned above were addressed through very practical actions. The Victim-Oriented approach was implemented through:

- the preparation of informative materials for the women in their own languages,
- the provision of legal counseling and representation,
- the appointment of a case manager who could speak the women's native languages,
- the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), based on the Palermo Protocol and UNICEF's Guidelines for Assistance to Minor Victims of Trafficking, and continuous lobbying work, based on the victim's interests, with the police, the judiciary and the relevant government Ministries.

To achieve the aforementioned ritualization of time, a schedule of weekly activities was designed. The women were not forced to participate in any of them but, given that the activities were considered interesting, the women demonstrated that they liked to take part in them. This was shown by the fact that the residents began to know exactly which day and at what time a certain activity would take place. This encouraged them to readapt to a “normal” life style. The women learned to wake up in the morning, to eat at regular times, and to know what the next planned activity is—not because they were forced to, but based on their own interest in it. This helped to restore their circadian cycle, which had been destroyed by the lives they were forced to live in the past. Moreover, it created a frame of reference that helped orient the women and ritualized their days, thus creating a safer environment with more precise boundaries.

In order to help the women feel more comfortable and in control over the shelter space, the staff working in the Centre was trained in Art Therapy and adapted their training to interior decorating. Every group of women that arrives in the Centre is given the tools and the methodology to decorate part of the space where they are living. This creates a warmer environment and the possibility for the women to leave behind a remembrance of their passage through the Center. Thanks to these contributions, the Center has become less of an institution and more of a home.

The “In-Service” Training

A clear need arose to enhance the local staff’s capacity to provide psychosocial assistance and to break the sentiments of isolation which they were perceiving, as the only professionals dealing with this issue in the country. For this purpose, exchange visits among staff members from different countries’ transit centres were organised (Macedonia, Kosovo, Albania). All of these staff members had valuable experience with victims of trafficking.

It was decided to concentrate on the elaboration of a format group therapeutic workshop, to be held for an hour daily for a period of three weeks, in order to allow any of the victims participating in it to attend the therapeutic path till the end. The Workshop had to be adaptable to the constraints mentioned above: variations in the group, limited timing, the issue of transition (i.e., the tension between the past and the future and the strange role played by the present) and the specific characteristics of the Transit Centre (i.e., the absence of a room for the workshop, among others).

Only the staff working in the Transit Centre could design such a workshop, thanks to their expertise gained through years of work in the Centre and frequent contacts with the women. Still, to do so, they needed support and to share “best-practices”. It was therefore decided to organise four “in-service” trainings, based on the “learning by doing” methodology of the Brazilian pedagogue, Paulo Freire.

Six relevant international female professionals were invited to run four one-week workshops directly with the victims in the Transit Centre. The psychosocial staff of the Centre participated as facilitators, observers, or direct participants. At the end of the four weeks, they designed a format workshop, applying the best practices from the four prior workshops to their experience, expertise and every-day needs.

The professionals invited to participate in this pilot project are internationally recognised in their own fields. Not all of them have worked with victims of trafficking before, but they have all worked in the past with women in need. Each of them has a very different background, from different disciplines and areas: from Family Therapy (Nada Polovina) to Clinical Psychology (Idit Albert and Ines Santos), from Drama therapy and creativity (Sue Jennings) to Social Work with street workers (Grazia Macchieraldo and Pierfranca Borlone from *Piccolo Principe*). Given the different characteristics of the women sheltered in the Transit Centre and their different reactions to the experiences they endured, the approach in the workshop should, indeed, be multidisciplinary and combine different methodologies, according to different needs, changing over time.

This notebook is a collection of the reports of the workshop run by the above-mentioned professionals in the T.C., a description of the activities they conducted, and their self-evaluations of the work and its results. The notebook begins with a paper from Diana Tudorache, presenting the psychological anamnesis of Victims of Trafficking in a Transit Situation, based on her two-year long analysis carried out in the Transit Centre for Victims of Trafficking of Kosovo. The notebook concludes with a piece from the NGO, “For A Happy Childhood”, who has worked in the T.C., and offers an in-depth description of their assistance program and the manner they integrated the best practices from the training modules in it.

The same assistance program cannot be applied to each and every Transit Centre. Indeed each plan of psychosocial assistance has to be tailored to the specific political, investigative, logistical conditions of the Centre, as well as to the needs of the women, who might differ from one transit country to another, due to the different level of violence of the traffickers, the main ethnic origins of the victims, etcetera. Given the lack of literature in this

field, we decided to make available the experiences, paths, games, reflections, mistakes and best practices experimented with during the last year in the Transit Centre of the Republic of Macedonia, in order to provide other professionals with a valid tool for exchange, comparison, and confrontation. We concentrated on the work with groups instead of the individual therapy since this is the speciality of our program. Some of the practices, readapted to the local context, could help them improve their level of assistance, just as the experiences of colleagues from other countries and different backgrounds have helped us.

About the Men

I would like to conclude this introduction with a personal note. As you will notice, only women wrote the papers contained in this notebook. These women wrote about women. The NGOs working in the Transit Centre are women's NGOs; the IOM staff working in the T.C. are female also. Policewomen guard the place. The trainers and facilitators are also women.

I'm a man. I'm in charge of the program, created this training, and compiled this notebook. I've never run a workshop directly with the victims sheltered in the Transit Centre, even though this is my profession. Whenever I have hired someone to provide assistance in the Centre or called a trainer or a therapist for help, I have chosen a woman.

But human trafficking is not only a female issue. Millions of men have been trafficked as well. And trafficking is not only an issue of female victims and male exploiters. More and more women can be counted among the traffickers, including women who are former victims of trafficking.

Still, when we talk about the trafficking of females for sexual exploitation, we have to ask ourselves about the appropriateness of having men working as service providers to the survivors.

I strongly believe that, in long-term rehabilitation and reintegration paths like the ones that can be carried out in the countries of origin, the presence of male therapists, care givers, and facilitators is necessary. Indeed, they can help the survivors to perceive men, men's roles, and their own roles in relation to men in a different fashion. This can help them to better reintegrate in societies where men are present and often have leading roles. The presence of men who act according to different behavioural patterns than the traffickers or the clients is therapeutic itself.

However, in a transit situation, the time is limited, the traumatic experience is very recent, and it is easy for the victims to assimilate the figure of the trafficker with the one of the caregiver, since some similar conditions exist, including the lack of freedom of movement and the caregiver's decision-making power over some of the victim's basic needs.

Victims of trafficking have been perceived to communicate through seduction. Seductiveness appears to be their only way to make requests. If we accept this to be true, we must not judge or condemn the women's actions, because the reasons for this behaviour are to be found in the psychological exploitation of the victims. Sometimes seduction can become the only possible language a survivor of trafficking can use towards a man, since it is the only one she has ever been allowed or requested to use.

Therefore, a male caregiver must be able to avoid this kind of seductive communication, while taking care not to frustrate the victim, by rejecting her seductive way of communicating.

This very sensitive game, played on the edge, can have effective results only if the caregiver and the survivor use it to establish a new system of communication. Still, this is difficult to achieve in the limited period of the therapeutic relationship within a Transit Centre. Moreover body language, which is usually the most effective tool to achieve this goal in a timely fashion, cannot be considered a valid possibility in this case. Indeed it risks symbolically duplicating the mechanisms of exploitation, as well as practices of prostitution.

That is why I thought that the presence of male caregivers in the Transit Centre, including mine one, was inappropriate. I limited myself to roles that fit into the given stereotypes, using the fact that I am male as a means to deal with the police, at the political level, and when attending to the management side and the supervisory aspects of the Centre. In doing this, I probably reiterated the same mechanism of the division of roles that, according to female studies, supports the basis of trafficking in women for sexual exploitation (see Polovina in this volume for example). I hope I did so in the best interests of the individuals I was working for in mind. I hope, as well, that this notebook will help my female colleagues in their difficult, demanding, absorbing, but also rewarding job. Theirs is a occupation in which their gender and personal identity are questioned everyday through the dramatic experiences of other women, that can sometimes act as a distorting mirror, while at other times can serve as a dramatic amplifier, of what being a woman means in a world characterised by male principles.

General Considerations on the Psychological Aspects of the Trafficking Phenomenon

*Diana Tudorache**

The Traumatic Nature of the Trafficking Phenomenon

Trafficking has many different dimensions: it is an issue of violence against women, an example of serious human rights violations, an economic and development issue with consequences for entire regions and their individual societies, and, ultimately, a criminal matter, in which the traffickers – and not the women – are the perpetrators.

Migrating women are especially vulnerable to sexual exploitation and to the health consequences of sexual violence, having moved outside of their traditional social and cultural safety networks into different societies where they do not understand the language and the behavioural patterns. Subsequently, their existence is often quickly twisted into a life of extreme dependency, with clandestine and promiscuous living conditions.

The consequences of the trafficking experience for its victims, and especially for the women being trafficked for sexual purposes, are horrendous; therefore, the response of the assistance providers needs to be tailored and measured accordingly. The direct negative effects that trafficking has on its victims are the health consequences.

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Women who are trafficked suffer the same, or often worse, injuries, infections and traumas as those suffered by women who are battered, sexually assaulted or raped. For the victims of trafficking, apart from the typical circumstances of sexual violence, the repeated incidents of surprise, isolation, threats, and the deliberately malicious “treatment” inflicted on them by the traffickers contribute to intensifying the severity of the impact of the experience.

Traffickers exert extremely brutal and manipulative control over their victims, from both a physical and a psychological perspective. They use rape, beating, torture, starvation, physical exhaustion, isolation, deception and death threats to force the victims of trafficking (or VoT) to obey their rules and orders. (IOM-C.T. Unit - 2002)

The trafficking experience violates a person’s autonomy at the level of basic bodily integrity. The VoT is not allowed to decide when or if she eats, when or if she can rest, and repeatedly, her body is injured and invaded. This loss of control is often recounted as the most humiliating aspect of the trauma. In many cases, this dehumanising process is carried to the level of taking away the victim’s personal documents and giving her a false identity in return. It cannot be emphasized enough that in the context of trafficking, by definition, the victim’s point of view is not taken into account at all.

This tremendous and constant level of violence and emotional pressure places the VoT in a situation where they learn to accept anything. All of their means and abilities to respond to or face danger are annihilated and the traffickers use these techniques to subjugate women often into sexual exploitation.

Such accumulated traumas and fears also make the VoT incapable of trusting any one. The reality around them is distorted, and the victims become doubtful of themselves and of others. Therefore, it becomes very difficult for them to make a radical decision such as breaking the circle of violence and looking for help to go back home.

The debilitating effects of uncontrollable and aversive events have been demonstrated in a variety of experiments on both animals and humans. Dr. Martin Seligman, from Pennsylvania University, studied the effects of constant coercive actions on animals. The subjects normally started to lose weight, to be agitated and depressed, and when they were allowed to escape, their responses ranged from complete inability to move to avoidance behaviour.

Seligman termed this phenomenon of passively accepting one's circumstances as "learned helplessness" (Seligman, 1975).

Rothbaum suggested that, when attempting to control events, people either try to change the environment to fit their desires ("primary" control) or to change their selves to fit the environment ("secondary" control).

When people believe they are unable to exert primary control over events, they may become passive and withdrawn in order to avoid the disappointment and possible loss of self-esteem that would result from repeated failed attempts to control seemingly uncontrollable events.

For the VoT, "primary control" is manifested by attempts to oppose the traffickers' rules and demands. Most of the VoT reported that they have tried, at least once, to directly oppose the traffickers or to escape from the bar. When such "primary control" cannot be gained, the VoT resort to "secondary control," meaning that they become passive and repressive toward their own feelings and beliefs. The victim has low self-esteem as a result of the repeated abuse she has endured and comes to believe that there are no "better" alternatives to the abusive situation.

This further explains the reasons why most of the VoT become numb, passive and doubtful, and seem incapable of fighting the terrible situation in which they end up.

All too often people blame or criticize the victims for this passivity instead of understanding it as one of the outcomes of the criminal treatment that these women are forced to endure.

Psychosomatic Reactions in Relation with Trauma

Traumatic events generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity or a close personal encounter with violence or death. The ordinary human response to danger includes both biological and psychological reactions. When a person perceives danger, the body reacts by increasing the flow of adrenaline and going into a state of alert. This explains why people, who are in threatening conditions/situations, are often able to disregard hunger, fatigue or pain. Danger focuses a person's attention on the immediate situation. All of these reactions are accompanied by intense emotions of fear and/or anger that can either mobilise or paralyse a person. In other words, in a crisis situation a person chooses to fight or to flee.

Traumatic reactions occur when re-action (the escape) fails or when mere resistance is impossible, and the human self-defence system becomes overwhelmed and disorganised. At this point, the traumatic event produces pro-

found and long-lasting changes (damage) in physiological arousal, affection, and cognition. The traumatic event not only affects these functions individually, but also alters the way in which they inter-connect and work with one another.

The trafficking experience includes repeated instances of severe abuse, with no mental respite or period of “normalacy or peace,” because the VoT never knows what will happen next; when the next outburst or violent episode will occur.

What are the normal human reactions to abnormal events, like the traumas of the trafficking experience?

Physical reactions:

- Aches and pains like headaches, backaches and stomach aches
- Sudden sweating and/or heart palpitations
- Changes in sleep patterns and appetite
- Greater susceptibility to colds and illnesses (weakened immune system)
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs, and/or overeating

Psychological reactions:

- Shock and fear
- Disorientation and cognitive confusion
- Irritability, restlessness
- Worrying or ruminating – intrusive thoughts of the trauma
- Nightmares and flashbacks of the events
- Attempts to avoid anything associated with trauma
- Minimising the experience
- A tendency to isolate oneself and feelings of detachment
- Difficulty trusting and/or feelings of betrayal
- Feelings of helplessness, panic, and loss of control
- Diminished interest in everyday activities
- Loss of a sense of order or fairness in the world; expectations of doom and fear of the future

Some of these reactions — such as: a state of shock, disorientation, confusion, and marked symptoms of anxiety — are often not reported by victims who have endured prolonged trafficking experiences, since they tend to perceive these reactions as “obvious” and “predictable” and therefore do not feel the need to overtly mention them.

However, victims who have recently experienced the early phases of the trafficking cycle, such as the transport and transfer phase, have reported these kinds of physical and psychological reactions. For them, the traumatic experience is still fresh and consequently, their adverse reactions to it have not yet become “obvious” or “normal.”

Due to the nature of the trafficking phenomenon, the type of chronic trauma experienced by the VoT is not limited to a single disruptive event; instead the trauma is extended over a much longer period of time. Accordingly, the longer the VoT remain under the control of their traffickers, the more severe and long lasting are the effects of their trauma.

Clinical Status of the Assisted Women

The feelings of vulnerability and emotional pain that are experienced by the VoT, combined, often with a background of childhood abuse and mistreatment play a significant role in the occurrence and severity of the acute reactions.

The following are the most common reactions manifested by the victims assisted by the IOM Kosovo Counter-Trafficking (CT) Program as a consequence of the trauma they experienced:

Acute stress reaction (WHO, 1992). This is a transient disorder of significant severity, which develops in response to exceptional physical and/or mental stress. The victims reported experiencing: a subjective sense of numbing, detachment, a reduction in awareness, difficulty comprehending stimuli, disorientation, marked symptoms of anxiety leading to difficulty sleeping, irritability, and fatigability. Usually these symptoms can be observed shortly after the person was exposed to the traumatic event and disappear within 2-3 days. Partial or complete amnesia of the episode may occur.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (WHO, 1992). Post-traumatic stress disorder usually emerges within 6 months after the victim is exposed to the traumatic event. Typical symptoms that can be observed in the VoT include

episodes of repeated recollections of the traumatic event (“flashbacks”), including images, thoughts, perceptions, and/or recurrent distressing dreams of the event.

Dissociation and acts of deliberate self-harm Victims experience a splitting in awareness, or dissociation, that acts as an instinctive response which allows them to avoid processing or integrating the painful and undesired memories. The documented acts of self-injury by VoT have included: razor cuts, cigarettes burns, hitting or bruising self, ingesting various sedatives or chemicals. The victims can use the acts of self-injury as a way to deal with the emotional distress or stop the painful memories.

Depression (WHO, 1992) Typical symptoms include: a depressed mood, bleak and pessimistic views of the future, disturbed sleep and diminished appetite, reduced energy leading to loss of interest/enjoyment in normal activities.

Other symptoms that have been observed are: diminished ability to concentrate and pay attention, reduced self-esteem and self-confidence, feelings of guilt and unworthiness.

Ultimately, there is an extreme risk of suicide among women who have been trafficked. Some of them state that they decide to commit a suicidal act (such as taking sedatives, cutting their veins, or voluntary intoxication with various chemicals) so that they can be hospitalised and escape from the abusive environment where they are held captive.

Aspects Related to the Assisted Women’s Status While in the Shelter

During the first encounter with the victim, she is usually in a state of physical exhaustion, confusion, disorientation and fearfulness. She may also experience difficulties in remembering anything about her trafficking experience and, even when she does remember something, this is usually accompanied by intense emotions of distress and incoherence.

After being exposed to such terrifying experiences, most of the VoT reported re-living moments of the trafficking process in nightmares or sudden memories of events. Although the VoT tended to try and avoid such distressing memories, many times they would spontaneously reveal the traumas that they went through. Emotionally, the VoT’s state alternated between feeling restless and anxious, to being apathetic and persistently sad. Their avoidance behaviours took on many different forms and influenced the women’s conduct while in the shelter.

Most of the assisted victims are not used to receiving support or unconditional assistance. In many instances, the victims exhibit irritable and rejecting behaviour during the initial stages of the assistance. They cannot believe that this assistance is given “at no cost,” i.e., without anything expected in return. The VoT are used to being unable to fight or protest against the way they are treated and to being punished for not complying with the traffickers’ rules.

Anger is a normal response when a person has been mistreated, abused, and betrayed, and has, as a result, lost a basic sense of trust in others. Anger is also a component of the survival response in humans. While it helps people in life-threatening situations to mobilize all of their resources in order to fight, some research has shown that these responses to extreme threats can “get stuck” in persons presenting PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). This “automatic response” of irritability and anger can create serious problems for individuals with PTSD at work, in family life, in their feelings about themselves and in the relations with the assistance providers.

Consequently, sometimes the VoT manifest an understandable hostility towards people willing to assist them, as well as rules and procedures, like those they encounter while in the shelter, for example.

The experiences accumulated by IOM Kosovo CT programme staff, thus far, have indicated that, shortly after the VoT arrive in a welcoming environment (such as the shelter), where they are treated with **respect** and offered different assistance services, their willingness to receive information and to participate in reintegration activities significantly increases. As very few of them have ever had access to social or psychological support, it is crucial to apply a gradual and careful approach when initiating the counselling sessions.

Therefore, an efficient and properly directed counselling scheme, during the early stages of the assistance program, is critical to the development of the victims’ openness and acceptance of medium to long-term support plans.

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Psychosocial Support Program for Female Survivors of Trafficking

A Systemic and Family-Oriented Approach

*Nada Polovina**

Introduction – Initial Context and Basic Framework

The model described in this paper is an outcome of three days of intensive work (six to seven hours per day), both with victims of trafficking (henceforth referred to as clients), sheltered at the Transit Center for Victims of Trafficking in Skopje, Macedonia and with a group of psychosocial helpers who work with them. The activities took place in the Transit Center, in the hall where clients usually spend their free time.

Daily Methodology

Each day's work was organized in three pillars:

- Preparatory work with professionals (informing them about the day's general approach and the specific topics)
- Work with clients
- Follow-up work with professionals (reflections on the work carried out with the clients and the program of activities performed).

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Participants

Most of the professionals working in the Transit Center for Victims of Trafficking participated. The group consisted of 11 women and included psychologists, social workers, and members of or persons collaborating with a local NGO called, For a Happy Childhood. The professionals were informed about my qualifications, then the theoretical background, and the main concepts that formed the basis of the module. Then, they were informed about the strategy for implementing these ideas through the direct work with clients. (See note 1). The program was planned for 25 victims of trafficking, but when the activities began, there were only 5 victims in the Transit Center. Their ages varied between 17 and 27, they had different levels of education, and different trafficking experiences (some of them were in the shelter for the first time, others for a second time). Most of them came from Romania, only one from Moldova and nearly all of them came from poor families. The eldest victim was divorced with two children; the others were younger girls, no more than 25 years old.

The morning when the activities started, 5 of the 10 girls departed from the shelter to return to their home countries. This event created a specific relational dynamic described later in this article. The context of the first day of work was indeed characterized by the issue of departing and staying.

Theoretical-Experiential Background of the Approach

The working model was based on systemic thinking, a family approach, a feminist paradigm, and principles of psychosocial support and work with victims of violence.

Systemic Thinking With a Family Orientation

The main principle of systemic thinking focuses on the importance of the multiple levels of social systems/contexts and how they impact the individual's life path. Systemic thinking asserts that we are all inevitably influenced — either encouraged or constrained — in our choices and power position, by the different contexts of our interactions, i.e. our life and well being are deeply affected by external events and by other individuals, groups, members of our extended family, and larger systems.

Differences in power are defined at the socio-political and economic levels. Power is usually held by a dominant group, which often supports the formation of unjust social structures and poverty is one of the products/outcomes of this arrangement. Many people, especially the poor living in socially and politically disadvantaged regions, are stigmatized, deprived

and socially excluded from the wide range of social, cultural and material resources.

Low-income families, as all other families are open systems in constant exchange with its environment. But for them this exchange is marked by struggle with issues of equity and injustice, with miserable and demoralizing living conditions, with public discourse of blame and private stories of pain, hope, and survival. The work of social worker and family therapist, Imelda Colgan McCarty (1997), as well as the work of Elsa Jones -psychologist and family therapist (1993, 1994) forms the basis of this realm of thought, and simultaneously offer strong inspiration for the further elaboration of the ideas just mentioned (See note 2).

Some Concepts from the Feminist Paradigm

Gender is the most basic ecosystem grounded in biology and socialization, both different for men and women. Outcomes of this differences are performed in the “small scene” of everyday life like the differences in perceptions of the reality according to the given value systems and in the types of moral reasoning. They are also performed in the “grand scene” of public arenas, such as the political, economic and legal spheres. Knowing and understanding one’s own and the other’s gender, and the relationship between gender roles is essential for our everyday life, since gender is interwoven (in a complex way) into our identity as individuals, and with the power position of the socio-economic class and the culture/tradition to which we belong.

The two main concepts from the feminist paradigm that I used as my foundation are:

- Patriarchal patterns dominate gender relations
- Women are more likely to be defined as poor because their work is frequently underpaid and because of the poor child care provided by the state for working mothers.

The most important experience of poverty is powerlessness, therefore Elsa Jones (1994) claims that women have a second-class status in the world, they are the global “underclass” and such a position invalidates their sense of self-reliance, damaging their self-identity.

Principles Stemming from Work With Victims of Violence

One of the main forms of women’s exploitation is the sex industry, which encourages violence against them. It is commonly acknowledged that vio-

lence and sexual abuse are among the most distressing experiences a person can face. When they are combined with threats to one's life, the result is a borderline situation, which strongly attacks a person's integrity and identity, to an extent that the person's psychological existence is deeply and profoundly challenged. Effects of such experience on later life are broad and profound.

From these "dark corners of life," the issue of violence and sexual abuse shows its face first in the domain of the "helping" professions (social workers, psycho-social counselors, etc.) and becomes one of the most distressing experiences such professionals are faced with. Their work with victims of violence and sexual abuse invites not only professionally structured personal engagement (building relationships and trust so as to understand and support the functioning of their clients lives), but also strong engagement that is action-oriented (ensuring the safety of the victims) and/or advocacy-oriented (lobbying for the acknowledgment of victims' rights and the responsibilities of the abuser and the larger society).

Psychosocial Support

The Psychosocial support approach was developed for helping in situations of trauma and stress. The psychosocial support approach includes an action frame, mechanisms, and different activities that protect people in distressing and difficult situations, and provides them with positive human relations helping to restore their sense of self-respect and ability to overcome anxiety and despair.

The specific objectives of psychosocial support programs are to reduce the impact stress and trauma has on the individual and to strengthen individual and community coping mechanisms and healing processes (See note 3). One can identify two major perspectives from which the healing process can be focused and articulated. One is the so-called, "Damage model" (focused on deviance and damage, i.e., a pathologizing frame of explanation and action); the other is known as the "Challenge model" (focused on development and identifying and building individual strengths and resources).

As Sybil and Steven Wolin inform us (1994) the Challenge model is oriented towards helping a person to withstand the hardships of his life and repair his belief in himself. This can be done by supporting the person in trouble, breaking the cycle of troubled living, and mastering painful memories by putting the past in its place. The Challenge model supports self-development through raising awareness (insight), enhancing independence, initiative, humor, creativity, morality, and most of all knowledge and understanding of the importance of articulating one's own needs in relationships with others.

General Frame and Structure of Work with Victims of Trafficking

The overall objective of the work is: “to improve the psychological quality of the victim’s life in the first period of emerging from the dark part of the world.”

The main focus of the work is:

- To develop awareness of broader contextual pressures and the interconnectedness of poverty and gender,
- To assist the clients to start changing their self-perception from victims to survivors (to restore elements of identity), moving from a state of depression and fear to the awareness of one’s self and others,
- To support the clients in recognizing their own vulnerability, as well as their own resiliency.

The First Day of Work With the Clients

The main issue of the work during the first day was: the connections between poverty, gender, culture, and broader systemic influences (the ways one perceives public voices and labels and allows them to become a “self-fulfilling prophesy”). The structure of the first day’s work and activities included:

- An introductory exercise – Members introduced themselves, and then the themes of the day were presented. This segment also established the way the group will work and the rules of participation (the women should actively participate in the exercises if and when they feel good about doing so).
- The key exercise – This was centered on the assessment of the women’s vulnerabilities and capacities starting from an analysis of the impact that the broader social context had had on these characteristics.
- Closure of the work – Group members’ thoughts and feelings were summarized and integrated.

An Introductory Exercise

The introductory exercise consisted of pronouncing one’s name with variations in:

- Name- (first name, second name, nickname, preferred name),
- Tone and volume of the voice (loud, whispering),
- Posture (sitting, standing, crouching).

The group leader starts, setting an example for the others. At the end of the exercise, the name with which each participant feels most comfortable is written on a piece of paper, whose color and shape is chosen by the woman, and that name is used in all further communications in the group. One flip-chart page was full of names and nicknames written on small pieces of paper with different shapes and colors; although they were spread around they still formed/made a complete picture. The paper was put on the wall and stood there during the entire three days of work. Time needed for this exercise is between 15 to 30 minutes depending on the number of participants in the group, (see Ognjenovic, 2001).

This way of introducing brings fun and joy to the group and helps to establish feelings of equality and connectedness between its members. It is indeed important for the women to have an unusual way of self-identification. Indeed, the victims are asked several times after their rescue to identify themselves in official ways and settings. An introductory exercise was chosen for its ability to facilitate or enable two parallel processes to occur simultaneously – one of introducing and joining all of the group participants on equal ground and the other of facing and confirming one's own identity in the new group setting.

Introducing the Key Theme of the Day

The same morning when the activities started, five girls departed from shelter and went home. This separation raised the issue of leaving and staying and created different relational dynamics and meanings. From the perspective of the professionals working in the shelter, the meaning was centered on the rituals involved in preparing for departure. (“All the girls participate in “fixing up” those who are leaving – doing their hair, helping with their clothes and make-up so that they look beautiful, like dolls”). I saw sadness connected to this separation and when I addressed the situation from this angle, the clients strongly negated it and turned/switched to a “wishful thinking” perspective (“We are glad that they get to go and each of us wants to be in their place; we live for the moment of going home”).

In this context, the main exercise of the day was introduced as the connection between the issues of home and homeland with the present, “here and now” situation of group work.

The Key Exercise

I created this exercise to address the main issues through a multigenerational perspective (wishes, realities, and challenges for change for old, middle-aged and young women). The purpose of this exercise was to initiate reflections and an understanding of larger systemic pressures and their impact on women's lives through a recollection and comparison of the life

stories of two or three generations of women. On a deeper level, this exercise gave an opportunity for insight into personal living and clarified the differences between the public versus the private domain of life, i.e., between stories told and stories lived.

The main activities planned in the exercise included: recalling and narrating the lives of three women from the survivors' native land (a woman who belonged to her grandmother's, mother's or her own generation) and writing a short story about the chosen women's lives with the help of a guideline list of issues and questions (See note 4). When the stories were finished, they were shared in the group together with participants' feelings and thoughts. The group leader extended the discussion by introducing questions like: Do you perceive the story as real or as romanticized? What was the biggest life burden in these women's lives? What was the biggest challenge/ most valuable part of her life? What kind of messages can one get from such a life path? The time needed for this exercise depends on the number of participants and the organizational form of the work (small and then big group work or just a big group discussion), but it requires at least one and a half hours.

The steps planned for this exercise has to be reduced due to the language problems, in addition to the fact that it demanded much more concentration than the participants had. Consequently, each client ended up writing just one generation's life story instead of writing three. Some of the professionals working in the shelter also participated in the exercise. The clients started speaking about woman from their families —their mothers or substitute mothers. Two of the five clients told stories about their aunts or female cousins to whom they "were given" in the childhood for adoption. Their memories were full of gratitude to those women who accepted them and unspoken sorrow and grief connected to being given away and separated (and disassociated) from the rest of the family. All the stories presented mixed elements of idealization and the description of an unsupportive and hostile social and economic reality. It was only through my questions that the word "poverty" was spoken. When clients described the women's life stories, I asked, "Would you say that she lived in poverty?" They would answer, "Yes." There are different possible interpretations of this moment. Some of them that come to my mind are:

- The word "poverty" belongs to the "dark world" from which one has to escape;
- Living in poverty normalizes the condition so one does not consider it to be a problem.

It may be that both of these explanations have a place on different levels of an individual's personal psychological space. When one of the professionals who participated in the work shared her stories about three generations (old-middle-new), the clients listened carefully. Reflecting on one of the story's episodes about the relationship between a grandmother and granddaughter, one of the girls said: "I wish I were in her place." Again it looked like wishful thinking is a readily available and easily activated form of thinking for the clients.

Closing Exercise

The life stories of the three generations presented by the women were elaborated with the goal of change and sharing "women's wisdom." The messages that the women found applicable from these stories were:

- Be a good wife, and be obedient (old generation/grandmothers).
- Children are important (middle generation/mothers).
- Don't make mistakes, don't rush; use your opportunities. (new generation/clients).
- It is important for women to help each other.
- It is important to know whom to trust.
- It is important to preserve positive thinking about the life ("to have hope in your heart").
- It is important to think and try to find solutions for life's problems.
- It is important to have good family relations, to have a husband and children.
- It is important to be loved and respected.

On the group level, final integrated reflections developed around the impact of poverty on women's lives. It was recognized that poverty affects women's moods, their capacity to feel happiness, their chances of working in a job they like, the opportunities for their needs to be met, and their personal time. The first working day concluded with the group pronouncing each person's name in unison.

Through the planned activities of the first working day (especially the introductory exercises that combined play and fun with issues of identity), a good atmosphere was created (of connection, care and trust), which opened the door for the successful implementation of almost the entire total planned work structure. One indication of this was the issue of language: the problem of language and translating (from English to Romanian and

then to Moldavian) was present at the beginning of the work. However, the issue was spontaneously resolved when the clients recognized/acknowledged that they all understood the Serbian language and preferred for the work to be done in Serbian, instead of in the complicated multi-lingual translation process.

The Second Day of Work With the Clients

According to the plan, the main issues to be focused on were: poverty, gender, and family. The day's framework included:

- An introductory exercise;
- The key exercise focused on working with personal gendergram (See note 5), challenging the clients to plot the events of life from gender perspective; and
- Closing and integration activities.

The second day started by slowly gathering in the workspace and sharing thoughts and feelings as feedback from previous day. The clients clearly stated that the work of the previous day was important to overcome the separation from the women who left.

Introductory Exercise

A short discussion about gender as an inherited belonging, about the genuine need of being in relationships, and about possible enriching or endangering aspects of relationships opened the session.

Each participant in the group was invited to draw her own hands on paper (drawing lines around both the left and right hands). Then, the clients' were asked to draw or write inside the hands something that conveyed their opinion of what they need in a relationship in order for it to be good for them, as well as what they don't want their relationship to be like or include. As a conclusion of the exercise, the clients showed their drawings to one another and combined their opinions to make a list of "good" and "bad" components of relationships.

The exercise engaged the group in varied, active, and productive participation. When the drawings were completed, they were put on the ground in front of the participants to form a circle. Each participant stepped up into circle and read and/or commented about her drawing or words.

In order to feel good in relationships, the participants named a variety of properties needed (in total, 33 attributes were listed). The properties most frequently named were: honesty, trust, security, open communication, tolerance, and love. Participants also named a variety of characteristics of bad

relationships (28 in total), among which the most frequently listed were: dishonestly and being “two-faced,” mutual disrespect, manipulation, indifference, and “being without care or interest for other human beings.”

Though one can say that the most frequently stated attributes are projections of the clients’ trafficking experiences, it is equally valid to assert that the lists reflect the most basic and common human values. Working on the exercise greatly excited and actively engaged the clients. This was evident by the more than two hours of time spent on it; demonstrating that this was an area in which there was great interest, with many of the women’s needs connected to it. As a result, this introductory and “warm-up” exercise ended up being the key exercise of the day.

At the end of the exercise all the “hands – drawings” were put on the big paper and put on the wall besides already mentioned paper with preferred names.

Key Exercise

This exercise was planned to be the main one, but it became a supplement to the previous one.

Activities in this exercise include the following:

- Group participants are invited to write the beliefs and assumptions they were taught in their families of origin concerning how females and males should be (behave, feel, think), and how they should relate to each another.
- As a group, the same kind of “should” (injunctions) list is made about the character of the genders and the way they relate to each other. The expected result to change some assumptions about gender roles and gender roles in relationships, keeping in mind the cultural context the participants are living in.
- Each client is invited to work on a gendergram in open dialogue with me as a therapist.

During the exercise, the following assumptions about gender roles and gender relations were articulated:

- A woman should be: a housewife, clean, faithful, honest, beautiful and obedient.
- A man should be: physically strong, a gentleman, hard working to money, a host and a father.
- Relations between women and men should be: egalitarian, mutually respectful, and honest. Women should be obedient to men.

One can recognize confusion about nature of relations between women and men (there is a “mixing” of patriarchal and modern elements of relational patterns in the power interactions between the genders).

Work on a gendergram was postponed since the clients were not ready for this exercise, plus due to a lack of energy and time on the part of the group as a whole.

Concluding exercise: The participants concluded the second day of work by speaking their names (birth names and nick names) and shaking hands.

The Third Day of Work

The planned structure for work was been focused around personal resiliencies (inner resources for overcoming life’s hardships) and included:

- An introductory exercise
- The key exercise – developing awareness of personal resiliencies
- A concluding exercise.

Introductory exercise

The exercise started by inviting participants to pay attention to the importance of the foot in our lives; both literally and metaphorically our feet ground us, take us places, and so on. The clients were asked to draw an outline around their left and right foot, to label one of the feet, “Avoiding footstep,” and the other, “Approaching footstep,” and then to draw or write inside each foot something (words or pictures) that reflected their thoughts and feelings. (What knowledge or wisdom does the “Avoiding footstep” and the “Approaching footstep” need to have in order to bring the client to the places and goals she feels good about?)

During the exercise, the clients jointly elaborated a written list with the following content: an “Approaching footstep” needs to bring us to the sea, to find a job, to places where we can have fun, to our mothers. In order to bring a person to the aforementioned places, the “Approaching footstep” needs to develop personal strength, cleverness, “to know the ground” (i.e., be informed), to have a good orientation, to have the courage for struggles, to be secure and stable and to care for others. In order to bring a person to list of places above, an “Avoiding footstep” needs to steer clear of long journeys that take a person far away from loved ones and from one’s native land, to know to avoid bad people, and to avoid troubles with the police. In order to fulfill this mission, the “Avoiding footstep” needs to think and be informed, to stay away from certain types of communication, to have self-control, to be ready to face one’s own fears, and to be stable.

Key Exercise

The aim of this exercise was to create the possibility of “opening up” the traumatic experience and to directly focus on personal resiliencies (the survival part of experience). The introductory activity consisted of reading the short story by Jacob Kranz with which Wolins (1994, p.1) begins their book on the resilient self, putting the story under heading “*Pain and Opportunity*”. The story is about a king who owned a large and beautiful diamond of which he was justly proud. One day, this diamond accidentally sustained a deep scratch. The king called the most expert diamond cutters offering them a great reward to remove imperfection from his jewel. But none could remove the blemish and the king was deeply distressed. After some time, a gifted craftsman came and offered to the king to make the rare diamond even more beautiful than it had been before. And with a superb artistry the man engraved a lovely rosebud around the imperfection, using the scratch to make the stem. At the end of the story, the author elaborated the message to the reader: “When life bruises us and wounds us, we can use even the scratches to etch a portrait of beauty and charm”.

The clients were invited to think about and then describe one recent difficult life episode (i.e., their trafficking experience), that is, if they felt ready to share this episode with the group. The other participants were invited to listen carefully and try to “pick up” the survival component of the described episode and the client’s behavior.

None of the clients was ready to speak about their trauma in the group context, but listened carefully to the story of one professional’s personal experience of sexual violence. The whole group participated in a discussion about the episode and about actual and possible coping behavior.

To accommodate the actual working reality in the group, I decided to restructure the concluding part of the work and offered an exercise about each client’s eco- map (See note 6). This work brought attention to the very poor support network clients had at home, which usually meant one member of the family (most often the mother) or a friend or an organization (IOM or some similar women’s organization). This indicates the already recognized need for a stronger emphasis on local community work in the process of resocialization.

Conclusion – Integration

Attaching the papers with all the “Avoiding footsteps” and “Approaching footsteps” to the room’s walls and connecting this exercise to the drawings from previous days’ work marked the end of the session. Addressing one other by our preferred names and shaking hands was the way we said goodbye.

Overall Feedback of the Work

Feedback From the Clients' Perspective

In the feedback about the group work (four feedback list were obtained), clients expressed positive feelings and some specific benefits: "I have realized that I have a chance to be happy," "I realized that I have a lot of responsibility; my mentality is now different," "I realized that there are many things that I have not been thinking about before," "I have other things to think about than thoughts about going home".

Feedback From the Perspective of Professionals Working in the Shelter

The professionals gave their feedback through evaluation forms given at very end of the work. All respondents recognized important benefits of the seminar concerning, "new ideas, information, practical guidelines and possibilities to implement presented knowledge and experience that is highly relevant and concrete toward the phenomena." The respondents also stressed the seminar's benefits to the development of their own personal attitudes and behavior in the context of working with victims of trafficking.

Conclusion

When I planed and created the working structure for this psycho-educational seminar, I faced the challenge of working in a context that was entirely new/foreign to me (i.e., in a shelter with a group of women with trafficking experiences). More than the feedback cited above, the good emotional atmosphere that developed from day to day, confirmed the appropriateness of my approach to this kind of context and set of problems. For me, this work focuses on accelerating the victims' readiness to move from group to individual therapy. It is just a first step on the integration path that needs continual and persistent support and simultaneous work with relevant support networks.

Notes

1. This part of work was supported by written material (a 10-page manual with a short description of the approach, an elaboration of the basic concepts and premises, and a list of recommended relevant literature).
2. A specific approach called “Just therapy” is developed on the basis of a similar experience, and a reader interested in this topic could find some useful information in the article by C. Waldegrave and K. Amasese cited in the literature.
3. For more details see the report from the 4th International Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference on Psychological Support, (2001) Reference Center for Psychological Support, Copenhagen, Denmark.
4. The “Guideline List for Life Story Narratives” includes instructions for asking the client about topics/questions such as: Describe briefly the place (village or town, house or flat) and conditions of your life. Describe briefly the course of your life (facts about education, employment, work, marriage, and so on), and how your day-to-day life looked like. Try to recognize what were the biggest problems and difficulties of your life. What did you do to overcome life problems and difficulties, how did you manage? Who helped you in difficult moments? How have you tried to change your life for the better? What would you see as the most valuable part of your life? From your life experience, what kind of message/advice could you give to your daughter or your granddaughter?”
5. A Gendergram is a procedure designed to examine significant past and present relationships and influences on gender identity and the ways they have changed over time. It allows for the incorporation of the primary issues of both gender and generations (see list of literature).
6. An Eco – map is an assessment tool, a visual-graphic presentation of a person or family’s environment and relationships that serves to increase understanding of a person or family’s relational world and helps professionals in planning work strategies. The creator of this tool is a social worker named A. Hartman (see list of literature).

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**'Its Hard to Make Roots'
Dramatherapy, Playtherapy
and
Creative Theatre**

**An experiential programme for women who have been
trafficked into sexual slavery, and a training programme
for IOM staff and NGO workers.**

26-31 May 2003 in Skopje, Macedonia

*Sue Jennings**

Theoretical Background

As a social theatre practitioner and dramatherapist, I designed this programme to function in the 'here and now' of people's lives, and to give the opportunity for grounding their often chaotic experiences within a developmental framework.

The Embodiment – Projection – Role (EPR) developmental paradigm (Horley 1998, Jennings 1990, 1999, Watson 1999) forms the basis for structuring the programme because it is value free, and does not rely on one specific school of psychology or psychotherapy. Indeed, EPR charts a parallel 'dramatic' development of the person, which develops alongside phys-

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ical, cognitive, emotional and social development. If the EPR development is impaired through early trauma or institutionalisation, then it affects the functioning of other aspects of development (Jennings 2004).

The Embodiment stage (*E*) usually takes place between birth and 14 months where infants experience their senses, simple movement, physical stimulus and how they are held. Although there is dramatic interaction during this time, most of it is physical, for example with facial expressions and funny sounds. The texture of food and toys is particularly significant, and the smell of the mother, her clothes and the infants bedding, also makes a crucial sensory impact.

There is a transition from the E stage to the Projective or (*P*) stage at around 13 months when the infant takes greater interest in the world beyond the body. Many of the experiences are still very sensory such as sand and water play, finger paint and play dough, but the playing is external and there is a relationship between making a mess and creating order. Projective play becomes more object-focussed with bricks and puzzles, and then begins to have dramatic components with puppet and storyplay.

The change from the P stage to Role or (*R*) takes place at around 4 years, when children begin to play and sustain the roles, instead of creating them through the puppets and dolls. The R stage allows the child to develop dramatic play in the fullest sense, and is a precursor to creative drama, which commences at around 7 years.

Specific attention is paid to early sensory experience, which grounds and stimulates both cognitive and affective development (Oaklander 1988). Human senses in the archaic world, which I describe as being part of Playlore (Jennings 2003), are part of our apparatus for survival. We ignore our senses or bombard them at our peril.

In this programme EPR paradigm is used to structure experiential workshops in order to mirror developmental stages, which may have been interrupted or neglected. Therefore the workshops commence with movement and relaxation and non-verbal communication (*Embodiment or E*), progress into painting, drawing, mask making and story writing, (*Projection or P*), and finish with enactment and dramatisation, role play and performance, (*Role or R*).

In the design I bore in mind that many of the women now have sexualised movement brought about by their recent experiences, and it is important to find ways for them to re-discover creative movement. It is also important

for them to be able to give form to feelings in drawing and stories, and to play with different roles and have choices about the roles they take on.

The programme is designed with the following rationale:

1. By using the following creative methods participants focus on satisfactory past experiences, maybe from childhood and also a more hopeful future. The women have to undergo a great deal of disclosure work, which includes interviews with lawyers and police, and counselling and advice from doctors and psychologists. Therefore it is important that there are opportunities to go beyond the immediate trauma and find means to actualize creative resources that have probably been dormant for several years.

It is likely that participants have been asked to be 'creative' in their sexual activities with very extreme experiences or else they have discovered ways of 'dissociation' in order to survive such activities. Creative methods allow for the active imagination to be reactivated into artistic expression rather than sexual expression.

2. The creative work is contained within the process of ritualisation, of safe and secure themes, which create stability. People need the opportunity to work with metaphors and symbols that are familiar, either in their lives or from their imagination.

For example the 'safe cave' in the landscape gives more choices than working with the idea of 'house' which can have too many ambiguous associations

3. The work with the body has to be undertaken with care because of the experiences in the women's lives. When working with all forms of bodily abuse both physical and sexual it is important to have normative physical experiences through yoga, dance, creative movement, sports as well as beauty treatments, massage and clothes.

By using familiar folkdance themes and also new musical stimulus, people can both recognized the safety of their own cultural experience, as well as experience that innovation can be creative and satisfying.

A further point to make is that many of these women have been groomed into sexualized responses, as well as learning a body language that is seductive. Through creative movement they are learning a new way of communicating non-verbally.

Methodology:

The development framework of Embodiment – Projection – Role (EPR) as described above forms the basic structure for this programme. Since EPR has been shown to create a process of maturation through which infants and young people develop, in this context it can recreate a more satisfactory means of relating to others as well as increased self esteem, appropriate attachments and resilience. It promotes healthy maturation.

EPR is based on the developmental play that occurs in most young children.

Techniques:

Movement and dance to rhythmic music, guided imagery, drawing, story-work, drama and theatre, working individually, in small groups as well as the large group. There is a range of props including sticks, hats, shawls and story characters.

NB It is important that workers are alert to their use of language. For example since words like gay, sad and kill have changed their meanings over the years, we have to be vigilant to the context of the language we use. If we are asking people to be playful in the creative work, we must bear in mind that it can have other associations: for example these women may have been asked to be playful in a sexual way.



Philosophy:

People are invited to participate and are under no obligation to share their work or experiences. All women treated as equal participants in the workshop

Programme Content for the Five Days

Activities are coded with E or P or R to indicate the developmental stage as described above.

Day One

Session Plan: gentle introduction, working with 'I' rather than 'We' to reinforce individual identity; embodiment and physical work; story theme of the tree in the landscape

Participants: four women from the shelter and 11 staff – some from a local NGO 'For a Happy Childhood' and some from IOM; most of the staff were known to the women, even though there was real mix of those who worked in the shelter and those who were attending the training programme.

Actions:

1. Introduction to this type of work – sharing names and where we come from, and what do we do – none of the women said what they did – suggested that they say what they would like to do in the future.

2. Physical shake out and breathing exercises – breathing for health and to reduce anxiety – vocalize humming and vowel sound 'AH' ***E***

3. Push/pull – hands on your partners shoulders, try and push other across the room - working against the partner – developing strength; arm wrestle with your partner with either hand – these techniques are very important to develop strength and resilience –and identity – we are discovering the I of identity ***E***

4. Folk dance to Romanian music – ritual roots and familiarity – shared experience. ***E***

5. Tree of Life exercise – place feet shoulder-width apart and curl up towards the floor – slowly unfold and grow into a tree – upwards and outwards – blossom in Spring – fruit in Summer – harvest in Autumn – what colour is our tree? What type of tree? Make groupings of similarity and differences – important technique for 'rootedness' which assists security –

self esteem through the theme of ‘blossoming’ **E**

(all embodiment - E - work goes through development stages with parts of the body and as individuals, in pairs, small groups and whole group)

6. Guided Imagery: Close eyes and meditate on a landscape – one that you like – maybe it is familiar from your childhood or adulthood or maybe you are inventing it. Walk through the landscape looking around you – you see a new tree – not the one that you were earlier – is it one that you know? Look at all its detail – how old is the tree? Imagine that you are the tree – what can you see? Think of a story that the tree has seen. **E/P**

7. Imagine you are the tree and write down everything you can see and also the story that you have witnessed. Keep it safe for later. **P**

8. Draw a picture of your tree and create the ‘Forest of the Group’ - place your picture near where you think it is in relation to other trees – look at the groupings – we had three major groupings: sea, backyard, fields – this technique helps us look at the dynamics of the group, who is near to whom, who is on their own and so on. **P**

9. Create small groups of similar trees and tell them your description and story. **P/R**

Is it possible to combine elements from all the stories or are they very different?

10. Relaxation exercise – sit or lie comfortably while there is gentle music - reflect on your journey through the day – where did we start and where are we now. Beware of any tensions and focus on it to relax. Take time to wake up. **E**

11. Whole group gathered for 10 minutes for question and comments

Reflections – people seemed relaxed and all participated and mixed well. Work obviously aroused memories – some could not be shared. Staff participated very willingly and shared with whomsoever was their partner. Women delighted at the idea of a celebratory barbecue, which it came up in the discussion. For the Romanians it is an important part of their normal life-style at home.

People are encouraged to bring stories, dances and poems – trying to make it a shared experience rather than a leader situation.

(My thoughts for tomorrow – continue the tree work – perhaps into stories and enactment – working with ‘we’ – more trust exercises – but maybe embodiment for more strength)

Day Two

Session Plan: process what we did and include thoughts from yesterday as well as forward planning, to create structure; take on board what the women want to do.

Actions:

1. Discussion from yesterday – sharing any dreams – planning menu for our barbeque – creating folders for our work – looking at photographs from day 1.

2. Focussing technique - walk round the room – not touching anyone – faster and faster – then backwards (managing self in space) – fun! ***E***

3. An Augusto Boal (Schinina’, 1999) exercise: choose a partner – partner extends flat of hand out in front and moves it quickly round and round, up and down – the partner has to watch hand and try to follow it – do the exercise standing still and just moving body – then move quickly around the room and the partner must follow the hand. ***E***

4. Face partner and place both hands facing both your partner’s hand – keep hands still then each person takes it in turns to bend knees and go towards the floor – helps to develop co-ordination and movement of separate body parts. ***E***

5. Mime technique – creating ‘the wall’ with the flat of hand – the illusion that it is a wall – then play with partner moving round the wall – hide and seek. ***E***

6. Similarly create an imaginary ‘ball’ – throw it – bounce it with partner. ***E***

7. Create a game with partner using wall and ball.

E/R

this stimulates the imagination and improves coordination; because it is mime, communication has to be very clear.

8. Dramatise a scene with the wall, ball and tree in small groups– show the scene to the other groups. ***R***

9. Elaborate on the scene to create 'The Great Escape' scenes that include the wall and a tree and escape from a prison camp - show scenes to other groups. **R**

10 With partner, one closes eyes other takes person for a 'blind walk' with hand on shoulder. **E**

(this trust exercise establishes safety again after the theme of 'escape' which is a strong topic for the women and raising questions such as: what am I escaping from? Myself? My situation? My oppressors?)

11. Mime exercise. 'Walking the mountain' – first with nothing, then knapsack, then stick and bag – walking with burdens – reach the summit and see the view – see a shelter or a cave down the other side and walk towards it. **E/R**

(This 'seeds' in the idea of the landscape and the safe shelter or cave for later use)

12. The Heroine's Journey- the stages:

- i. call to go on a journey
- ii. Start the journey
- iii. Meeting with the danger
- iv. Call for help
- v. Overcoming the danger
- vi. Discovering treasure
- vii. Return back home or journey to a new place

People form groups of their fruit trees, from the first tree exercise.

R

Create the story of the heroine's journey – then turn it into play, rehearse it and show to the other groups. The four plays: 'The Apple Trees', 'The Cherry Tree', 'The Magic Forest', 'This is how it is'.

13. Create the 'Tree of the Group' physically in the centre of the room– who are the roots – trunk – branches and so on. **E/P**

14. Relaxation to oriental soothing music – reflect on the day

E

15. Closure in the circle – about half the group spoke today.

Reflections:

we seemed to be more engaged – a process of trust and creativity – working with other people and touch does not seem to be a difficulty with this group – real enjoyment of the mime exercises and attention to detail. Some reluctance for ‘performing’ initially – then people felt better AND realised that they enjoyed it. Two of the stories ended with weddings, one was about the healing of a sick mother, and one was about a child that had been kidnapped. How do they relate to the lives of these women – and the staff?

(My thoughts for tomorrow – remember it is last day for one person – and the barbecue – it will be half way through the group, so care with structure)

Day Three

Session Plan: feedback from yesterday, plan the session to include the ‘leaving’; discuss the masks and why I have chosen the wolf. One new woman arrived and two/three staff were absent. Tell the story of the first two days as a means of inclusion.

Actions:

1. Drawing the roots on the tree pictures – ‘its hard to make roots’

P

2. Everyone takes a ‘Kinder egg’ (I was hoping that some of them would have fairy tales in them but only one did! The fairy tale series has finished) – discover toys or fairytales – make small groups with links through the toys. There were clowns – train – storm – hunter toys. Use them as puppets to tell a story. Share small group stories with whole group. Whole group joins in the movement of the story. Remember story themes for later.

P/R

3. Choose a traditional wolf story (all positive wolf images) – three groups – tell story and discuss it. Draw the landscape of where the story takes place as a group picture. Show your picture and story to the rest of the group

P/R

4. Create a wolf mask – using 3 layers of A4 paper – colour the mask and name it.

P

5. Write about the mask in the first person **as if** you are the wolf. (character analysis)

R

6. Introduce yourself through the mask to your small group, and ask questions to each other’s wolf masks if you so wish.

R

7. What have you learned about yourself through the wolf mask?
8. Rehearse and practice the wolf stories: share it with the groups as a comedy – then share it without words then create the story in slow motion. **E/R**

(this encourages improvisation and role flexibility as people explore their stories in different ways – and can also help people to break through their ‘blocks’)
9. Plan it as a presentation for tomorrow and discuss costumes and props. **P**
10. Relaxation and reflections on the day – including the chaos at the beginning of the day! **E**

Discussion for closure and ending – share of wolf discoveries.

Reflections: the comings and goings of women and staff affected the dynamics of the group – one woman was not there and for another it was her last group – the secure structure became dissipated and people were easily distracted.

(my thoughts for tomorrow: look at re-establishing ritual structures and remember to create each day for itself. Find ways to contain changes – especially unexpected ones!)

Day Four:

Session Plan: try to re-establish the ground rules and boundaries – create the balance between ‘ritual and risk’ i.e. security through the ritual of known things which contains the exploration of more risky things; establish performance idea.

Actions:

1. Discussion: re-state ground rules – ‘phones off – staying in room – questions re creative process – introduce EPR again – acknowledge the changes in the group.
2. Recap from days 1 and 2 for new staff member and repetition of favourite exercises – The Wall, The Ball – games in two and threes, follow the hand - arm wrestling – breathing exercises/voice (all requested by group) **E**

3. Daffodil song in Macedonian and Romanian – less than lusty but we stuck with it! Learned gestures and movement to words. *E*

4. New trust exercise – 3 people in a line and centre person has their open and leads the others two with eyes closed – in a slow walk weaving in and out round the room – before people open their eyes describe what each other are wearing and how tall are they? *E*

(still elements of unfocused energy although less than yesterday – another person left and there was additional sadness – I must be aware of the comings and goings and the need to contain and hold the group more than usual – shift exercises to create more stability)

5. Large Group - sound and movement ex – The Rain Man: rub hands together – slap legs – drum fingers on the floor – thus creating the rain – the thunder and raindrops. (staff member created a variation of this exercise) *E*

shoulder and back massage - 'hot potato' (breathing hot air through the back of a persons cardigan or T shirt) *E*

hold hands in the big circle and pass the squeeze quickly round the group so it cannot be seen. *E*

(This is an example of a decision being taken during the group to deal with energy that is unfocussed and when people seem disengaged or insecure; the group leader 'senses' that a shift is necessary)

6. Story Groups – re-locate new people – 3 groups of 4 people – sit back to back for support – think about the story – costumes – props - masks – 'rehearsal as a process' – coaching – 'notes and feedback' – 'fine-tuning the presentations' – present rehearsal – think about what happens before the story starts – after the story ends – build in a sad farewell to contain the feelings of the group – more practice – present 'work in progress' to rest of group – the rest of the groups assist with sound effects and so on – 'always remember that the audience is as important as the players'.

7. Relaxation – reflect on the afternoon – and the people who have left – and the changes we have made in our plays – think about one thing we have learned about ourselves during the workshop today.

8. Feedback in large group – farewells – statements about 'feeling well' 'sleeping well' – discussion of performance tomorrow. Staff have asked to

start earlier tomorrow because of their weekend commitments – women not happy but agreed to an earlier start

Reflections: the atmosphere changed remarkably after we had done the group massage and so on – working physically as the whole group seems important for some of the time – the positive energy fed into the stories – presentations showed that the rehearsal time had created changes and development.

(My thoughts for tomorrow: be aware of closure and containment for tomorrow – consolidating group experience and reflecting on the journey through the week.

Day Five:

Session Plan: We had planned to spend most of the session rehearsing our stories and sharing them with people in the centre – security staff, the project manager and others in the centre. However it was also necessary to be flexible because of the dynamics of the group. It had also been suggested that people found it difficult to rehearse new roles that were in contrast to how they saw themselves. An example was given of one group member who always wanted to be looked after and dependant in the group and suggestions of taking other roles had been refused, (see summary of staff talk below).

Actions:

1. Discussion and settling into group – outline of today’s session.

2. Warm-up - repeat the spring rain and the rainmaker exercises.

E

3. Repeat the breathing and humming exercises.

E

4. Play all the roles together in the big group that we had done from the beginning – the most difficult being the authoritarian father and child.

R

5. Story groups – rehearse – some disruptions – video camera introduced with no negotiation. One woman chose to leave after first rehearsal saying ‘I don’t want to play a bitch’ – the role she had chosen in the play – and wanted to sit outside. The camera had been given to the project manager who was not a member of the group (although known to the group). I felt

this was a change in the dynamics with no negotiation with the group – and we need to bear in mind that many women from this situation will have been compromised in films. **R**

6. We continued to rehearse and then presented all the stories with new adaptations – despite the disruptions there was enormous development in the plays and people volunteered roles for other people's stories. **R**

7. Make the large circle and go through de-roling exercise from all the roles we had played, (mentally de-role from all the roles and then 'shake them off'). **E/R**

8. Relaxation exercise from any tensions through meditation and guided imagery. **E**

9. Closing feedback, acknowledging mistakes; presentation of certificates and photographs; goodbyes.

Afterthoughts: As the group facilitator I should have been firmer regarding changes to the structure, just because it was requested by staff. There was no doubt that the change to the last session from afternoon to the morning was very difficult for the women. It was originally planned as an afternoon group because the women needed to sleep late. They were still asleep when we arrived and were very sleepy for a lot of the session.

The coming and going of staff was also a disruption, since there was disruption with the women anyway. They were either journeying back home or being transferred to another place or being interviewed by the authorities. I should also have been clearer about the introduction of the video and who was going to film the plays. This had been done very clearly with the photographs and it went very smoothly.

In the future I would want to have a staff briefing in more detail first with an introductory workshop and then establish all the parameters for the group before we start on the work.

Nevertheless, the overall feedback was very positive from both staff and the women, and the themes were appropriate to the situation. The women seemed pleased that I had explained the rationale for all the exercises to them. The barbecue was a great success and is now part of the routine of the shelter. The women were pleased to be able to repeat exercises that they had enjoyed and were able to improve their skills. But as one of them said during the drawing of the tree, 'Its hard to make roots'.

Theory and Practice Talk for Staff: the staff also had time to discuss this approach (EPR) to active creative groupwork with women who have been trafficked. Specific themes are designed to build self-esteem, re-orientate the body, create group communication, facilitate mask and puppet work, and expand the imagination. They were all directed towards this group of people. The themes of 'self and other' and 'I and we', as well as the Great Escape and the trust exercises were all important to the experiences of these particular women. These methods enable changes in self awareness and start the process of re-creating their identities: something which has become distorted through the trauma of sex slavery.

It is also important to bring back fun and creativity into the lives of such damaged people.

They delighted in the mime exercises and group games and seemed to find a lot of security in this way. I said that would always be vigilant when observing women who continue to play out 'trapped roles' and find ways through the drama of them experimenting with new roles.

Finally it is important to keep alive the idea of culture in these groups – we are our traditions. Music and folklore, stories and customs are very important experiences and help to create security and stability. In mixed groups we have the sharing of culture.

The women were delighted that I knew something about their culture, including the regular enjoyment of barbecues! The sharing of rituals is an important part of this work.

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For complete bibliography please see: www.suejennings.com and www.dramatherapy.net. Also related is www.rowanromania.com

5 Day Workshop at the Transit Centre for Survivors of Human Trafficking

*Idit Albert and Ines Santos**

Introduction

Trafficking and Psychological Consequences

Human trafficking has become a global business generating huge profits for traffickers and organised crime syndicates, with 700,000 women and children trafficked yearly across borders (IOM, 2001a). Trafficking in human beings, particularly women and children, is a phenomena of increasing proportions in the Balkans and neighbouring countries (IOM, 2001b), with an estimated 100,000 women being trafficked from the former Soviet Union and around 75,000 from Eastern Europe mostly for prostitution and the sex industry (Nezer, 2000). Traffickers typically use coercive strategies to ensure that women do not escape, including sexual abuse, torture, starvation, imprisonment and threats of violence towards the victims or their families back home (Nezer, 2000).

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Despite these estimates and likely highly negative consequences for women's well-being and mental health, there is little research carried out into the psychological consequences of prostitution or being trafficked for sexual exploitation. One notable exception is a large-scale and very thorough study (Farley, Baral, Kiremire and Sezgin, 1998) in which interviews were conducted with 475 prostitutes across five countries. This study's findings showed that prostitution can be as traumatic as going to war, with 85% of the sample having significant post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms and 67% meeting the diagnosis for PTSD. Farley et al. found that violence was widespread and on average 62 % of the sample had been raped while in prostitution. These findings were the same across the five countries, which led the authors to conclude, "that psychological trauma is intrinsic to the act of prostitution".

Farley et al.'s study included some women who were trafficked but it did not specifically address the impact of trafficking. In fact, the mental health of trafficked women is a severely neglected area of research and to our knowledge only one study exists which has attempted to study this population of women (Raymond, D'Cunha, Ruhaini Dzuhayatin, Hynes, Ramirez Rodrigues, and Santos, 2002). In this study, 146 survivors of trafficking for sexual exploitation across five countries (Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Venezuela and the United States) were interviewed in order to gather qualitative accounts of their experiences as well as gathering data about the range of their difficulties. Of particular relevance here is findings of extremely high rates of violence and control, in the forms of physical harm (80%), sexual assault (60%) and emotional abuse (80%). Data showed that depression, anxiety and symptoms of trauma were common across the five countries with rates of depression and psychopathology as high as 84% in some of the sample.

Studies such as these highlight the severe mental health issues of survivors of trafficking and prostitution but there is no research into the type of psychological work that can be helpful in such cases and little is written about any interventions carried out with this population. This is the authors' account of a therapeutic intervention they carried out with survivors of trafficking awaiting repatriation at a Transit Centre in Skopje, Macedonia. It describes our trauma intervention model, our work with the survivors and the professionals, and the authors' reflections and recommendations based on their experience.

The Model: A Recovery Model for Survivors of Trafficking

Like many other mental health professionals working with survivors of trauma our understanding of the process of recovery from trauma and its consequences is informed by Judith Herman's (1992) comprehensive model. Unlike the majority of psychological models for trauma that concentrate on the reduction and elimination of symptoms, Herman's model eloquently describes a complete process of recovery from the initial stage when the survivor encounters help to the stage where she resumes normal life in the community.

Herman, who worked with survivors of domestic violence, rape, and political violence and also with refugees, described the recovery from trauma as a three-stage process. The central task of the first stage for the survivor is to establish safety and restore control over her body and the immediate environment. The task of the second stage is remembrance and mourning of the trauma, leading to the third stage with its central task of reconnection with ordinary life. The process is not always linear and sometimes the recovery progress is more variable.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has taken on the role of supporting survivors of trafficking throughout the process of recovery. In the next paragraphs, we will discuss how the counter trafficking programme could map into the three stages of recovery. We will discuss the first stage of the initial contact with professionals, and particularly the work that is done at the Transit Centre in more detail, as this was the stage in which we worked with the women.

Safety

After surviving the abuse inflicted on them by pimps/owners, clients and in some cases, by the police, the trafficked woman's basic need is to establish her present and future physical safety, as well as control over her body and immediate environment. This process could begin with the woman's first interview with the IOM representative in the Transit Centre. The process should continue at the Transit Centre with support from mental health professionals. The first stage of recovery is likely to be achieved when the woman returns to her country and is accommodated in a safe place with appropriate support.

Meeting with the IOM Representative

Despite the fact that the IOM interviewer is not a qualified therapist, their first meeting with the survivor of trafficking could play an important role in the woman's recovery as the interview is likely to be the first time she will recount her story in detail. It is therefore important that the interviewer receives training and ongoing support in her work to help ready her for encounters with women who have been exposed to severe trauma. The interviewer needs to be prepared to work empathetically with women who are presenting high levels of distress, yet be able to remain calm and contained in the face of the horrific accounts of abuse. As part of her training for the post, the interviewer should be informed that it is common for survivors to initially give accounts that are confused and include inconsistencies. Inconsistencies tend to diminish after the survivor has processed her experiences. This will help prepare the interviewer to tolerate gaps and inconsistencies in the women's accounts of their experiences and to remain open-minded.

The IOM representative also plays an important part in the women's recovery process by providing information about the programme and how her safety will be ensured.

The Transit Centre

Before we discuss the therapeutic work that we recommend for the Transit Centre, it is very important to stress that the Transit Centre needs to fulfil the expectations set by its name, that is, to be a place where the women are physically safe and where their basic physical and emotional needs are met.

When meeting the woman, the counsellor's goal should be to develop a therapeutic relationship. The following behaviours, on the counsellor's part, facilitate the development of a good rapport:

- conveying warmth and a willingness to assist
- enabling the woman to talk freely about her experiences and her emotions without probing
- listening sympathetically

Once the woman engages with the counsellor, the counsellor can start to concentrate on working with the woman on restoring her control over her body and immediate environment and helping her to establish a sense of safety.

Information is a powerful tool with which the counsellor can help the woman to regain control and understanding of her current situation and what she should expect in the near future.

When the woman arrives, it is important to provide her with information about the life at the Shelter: its routines, rules and social norms. Understanding the security arrangements at the shelter can help her feel at ease while she is there. The women should also receive information about any scheduled appointments, such as medical investigations or meetings with legal representatives.

After the woman settles in at the Shelter, she may benefit from individual sessions with the counsellor. At this stage, most women are likely to benefit from receiving information about common psychological difficulties that they might be experiencing such as anxiety, depression, PTSD, low self esteem, feelings of shame and guilt, experiences of dissociation, self harm and substance abuse and how such problems can be managed. The type of information could be given to the women in individual sessions as well as in workshops. This information can help the women make sense of their psychological difficulties and reassure them that they can learn to manage their difficulties. The information is also likely to help normalise women's experiences, particularly when difficulties are discussed within a group. Group discussions can help women work through feelings of shame and guilt by challenging the individual's beliefs about their role in their abuse.

Another important part of gaining a sense of control is restoring control over the body and its functions. The women at the Shelter had very little control over their bodies during the period they were trafficked. They did not have choice about their clients or what they did with them. Many women report not being allowed to sleep and having to be awake at nights. Some of the women were hungry and many did not have a choice of diet. It is therefore important to begin restoring a normal sleep routine and eating habits. The women will need to receive general information and individual assistance to help them to gradually establish these physical routines. Resuming normal eating and sleeping routines is a necessary step in re-establishing an ordinary life.

In our opinion, it is also important that the Shelter should offer a routine and some uninterrupted scheduled activities. We are aware that, at least initially, most women are likely to find it difficult to attend activities regularly. However, by providing an activity programme the Shelter can offer the women with a normal schedule as well as a structured environment in which they can achieve a sense of safety and control.

Repatriation

The survivors who participate in IOM's Counter-Trafficking programme return to their countries of origin. That is where they were most likely to have had the first encounter that led to their experiences of being prostituted and trafficked. Most women are therefore likely to feel ambivalent and anxious about returning home. Some are concerned that they will return to the pimps who might take revenge on them for co-operating with the police. Others are anxious about the nature of their families' reception and fear that they might be rejected and ostracised.

Only when the survivor returns to her country and is reassured that she is safe, welcome, and free to make plans for her future, can she feel safe and in control. However in some cases, the women might find that the situation at home has not changed and that they might still be at risk of being trafficked or that they are rejected by their community. In those cases women will need practical help to ensure that they are safe. Appropriate measures might include financial support for accommodation and job training, as well as encouragement and other help that will assist the survivor to take control over her future, so that she can protect herself.

Remembrance and Mourning

In the second stage of recovery, the survivor tells the story of her trauma in depth and in detail. This work of reconstruction transforms the traumatic memories so that they can be integrated into the survivor's life narrative. The survivor normally only embarks on this stage once she feels safe. Therefore, the therapeutic work of emotionally processing the traumatic experiences should normally only take place after the women are safe in their home countries and with local therapists.

The process should begin with a review of the woman's life story before the trauma as this normally assists the survivor to start processing the traumatic experience as part of her life.

It has long been established the best therapeutic outcome, in terms of emotional processing, occurs when the client can relive the traumatic experiences when recounting it in the therapeutic session (Rachman, 1980). This is best achieved by placing emphasis on re-experiencing emotions, smells, sounds, bodily sensations, and images when recounting the traumatic experience. Initially, it is very common for survivors of trauma to recount a confused version of their experiences, and it is therefore important for the therapist to be able to tolerate gaps and inconsistencies in the narrative.

Going through the traumatic experiences in detail normally highlights particularly difficult emotions that the survivor developed in relation to her trauma and which tend to maintain her current distress and difficulties. Those emotions should be explored and worked on in therapy.

Community

At this stage, the survivor becomes the person that she wants to be. She gradually develops an ordinary life where she has an identity beyond being a survivor. She devotes a “normal” amount of energy caring for her body, her immediate environment, her material needs, and her relationships with others. The woman regains a capacity for appropriate trust in others. She learns to protect herself and recognise factors that rendered her vulnerable to exploitation in her past.

Some survivors might want to confront the indifference of bystanders or those who participated in their abuse. Some survivors might want to take a public role in their community to prevent others from having similar experiences. Others might prefer to concentrate on living normal everyday life.

The women might encounter problems in their attempts to reintegrate into their community in situations where they are stigmatised and ostracised. In such cases, IOM might be in position to assist the women by helping them to settle in different communities, within their home country, where their past is unknown. IOM could also facilitate local projects to educate communities about the problem of prostitution and trafficking.

Therapeutic Work with the Survivors of Trafficking

Aims

One of the main aims of our direct work with the survivors of trafficking was to address issues relevant to them and teach them some skills that they could use in their everyday lives. During our workshop, we used a cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) framework, which enabled us to understand their difficulties within a theoretical framework and guided us in the selection of the issues that we covered. Two aspects of this model are particularly relevant to the efforts in the workshop- the idea of working collaboratively with the ‘clients’ and the psycho-educational component.

Working Collaboratively

This is a fundamental aspect of working with the women at the Shelter as it facilitates engagement in the workshop. Involving the participants, from the beginning, helps them to develop a sense of ownership of the programme and to invest themselves in it, thus making it more likely that they attend and use it.

Working collaboratively can be manifested in a number of ways. For example, the timing of the workshop was arranged through a discussion with the participants (1- 3pm fit in best with the daily patterns at the Shelter, according to the participants). Another important aspect of working collaboratively was to get the group to come up with their own rules for the workshop. This worked well in that it gave them ownership of the group and its rules and they were good at adhering to them. It also helped in engaging them to work as a group.

Another aspect of working collaboratively is arriving at a shared agenda with the participants so that they feel that the material to be covered is relevant to them and their needs. This can be done using a “brain storming” exercise in which the participants describe to us their difficulties and concerns, as well as their needs and hopes, for the workshop. Professionals can make suggestions based on their experiences and, if participants agree, these too can be added to the agenda. Using this framework, together we and the group set an agenda for the workshop. Topics to be covered included trauma, anxiety, depression and coping skills.

The methods used during the workshop itself also need to be within a collaborative framework, for example, using brainstorming exercises and small group exercises, so that the material being discussed is coming from the participants and they have a chance to reflect on it and explore it. We found that these methods worked very well and participants were able to engage well with these interactive methods.

Psycho-Educational Component

Educating people about their difficulties is another the key component of a workshop carried out in this setting. It is important for a number of reasons. Namely, it gives people an increased understanding about their difficulties, which is, in itself, extremely beneficial in that it can be reassuring and demystifying to understand the origin of a symptom. In addition, it normalises difficulties, it is empowering and gives people some control over their problems. Understanding the root of a dilemma is key in trying to sort it out.

A fundamental aspect of psycho-educational work is to educate about ways to deal with the difficulty, rather than to just increase insight

into it. In this way, people can develop methods of actually dealing with their difficulties, which again increases their sense of control. This fits into the overall model of recovery from trauma described above.

Therapeutic Material

The topics that the women raised as being pertinent to them were exactly the topics we had in mind from our previous work with traumatised people. This indicates that it would be useful to regularly address such topics within the workshop programmes: they included: trauma and trauma reactions, anxiety, emotions and particularly depression, coping skills, shame and guilt and self-esteem. These were the topics that we covered in the workshop. In addition, there were other topics that were very relevant but could not be covered in such a short workshop, including dissociation and skills to cope with it, suicide and other self-harming behaviours, and additional ways to cope with anxiety, such as controlled breathing.

As part of our contribution to the Shelter, we developed all these topics into a user-friendly session format, which we compiled into a folder that was given to the professionals at the Shelter for their use. Here we shall give just a brief overview of the therapeutic material covered; the folder should be consulted for more detailed information.

Trauma

In terms of trauma, the main message to convey was that it is a normal and understandable reaction to the extraordinary events that they had experienced. Participants need to understand that the difficulties they were naming—for example anxiety, nightmares and guilt—were related to the dangerous and life-threatening experiences they had been through and, in a way, still were going through. For some of the participants, being in the Transite Centre was clearly still part of their traumatic experience. One woman mentioned how she thought that it was all still part of a bad dream from which one day she would wake up.

It was clear from the workshop that all of the participants were experiencing traumatic symptoms to varying extents, such as difficulties in sleeping, intrusive and re-experiencing symptoms (such as nightmares and flashbacks), anger and irritability, dissociation, and hyper-vigilance. Though not specifically assessed, some of the participants seemed to be experiencing these symptoms at a level in which they may meet the diagnostic criteria for PTSD. This is an important point to note as it indicates that most of the women coming through the Shelter may be experiencing high levels of distress and trauma symptoms.

The workshop was not the appropriate setting to engage in any trauma processing. Some of the participants did start to talk about their traumatic experiences and many ventilated feelings about their experiences and we were careful to listen and validate them. However, we did not encourage them to open up further because it would not have been appropriate (it would have caused significant distress in themselves and others which would have been difficult to contain and may not have been therapeutic). Guidelines on how to engage in trauma work have been described in the previous section of this report.

In the brief time available, we tried to communicate the CBT model of trauma, based on the idea that thinking and dreaming about the trauma is a normal part of the process of getting over it. People need the opportunity to process traumatic events through thinking and talking about them, but because this is so painful, people tend to avoid doing so and it is this avoidance which maintains the symptoms.

Throughout the workshop, the idea of trauma kept being re-visited and was used as a context for understanding their other difficulties such as anxiety, depression, shame and guilt.

Anxiety

Through brainstorming and then small group exercises, we elicited information from the participants which we used to illustrate the CBT model of anxiety- how it is made up of situations/triggers, changes in the body, cognitive factors and behaviours which are all interlinked.

An important part of the work done on anxiety was to give people an understanding of the physiology of anxiety, which has shown to be very helpful in our experience. Using simplified terms we ran through the concept of anxiety as an innate reaction to dangerous situations that produce a number of physiological changes that prepare people for fight or flight- thus, causing the symptoms that they had reported. We illustrated this process using a drawing of a person, which showed how the various parts of the body are affected- e.g. breathing gets faster, heart beats faster and harder, shaking, sweating, numbness etc.

Coping with anxiety, in terms of relaxation was covered using two exercises: progressive muscle relaxation (where each part of the body is tensed and then relaxed) and the special place exercise (a visualisation exercise where people identify and then describe, in great detail, a special place to induce a sense of relaxation and safety).

Coping

Again, our purpose on covering this topic was to normalise the women's, experiences. We emphasised that coping is about getting through and surviving and therefore, whatever they had to do to survive was ok.

Coping is nothing to be ashamed of.

We introduced the concept of helpful versus unhelpful coping: that is, coping which was once helpful but now has disadvantages or is harmful in some way. In small groups, participants identified coping strategies that they use and grouped themselves according to helpful and unhelpful methods; this was then explored in a large group.

The participants in the group clearly engage or have engaged in some unhelpful/ harmful coping strategies such as drinking alcohol, taking drugs, taking pills (over using painkillers, for example), self-harm and getting into fights or hitting others. Alternative ways of coping were explored.

Emotions

By brainstorming, we got participants to name as many emotions as they could think of. The key concepts introduced were that:

- Emotions are normal and useful in communicating our needs to ourselves and to others and in guiding our actions.
- In order to cope with emotions we need to be able to identify them.
- Emotions have physical manifestations.
- The intensity of emotions can be represented on a continuum ranging from mild to severe.

Depression

This was a topic that proved to be highly salient and relevant to the needs of the women. The topic was well received and from our experience we can recommend that a substantial amount of time be dedicated to exploring depression with the participants at the Shelter.

Depression is very common in people who have been traumatised and it appeared to be common in this group. Depression, as an extreme form of sadness with an associated low mood, lack of motivation and energy, apathy, low self-esteem and hopelessness, seemed to affect all of the participants, to some extent, though actual levels of depression were not assessed.

We asked the participants as a large group name to name items which they associated with the word depression and as they said items, we grouped them into emotions, negative thoughts, behaviours and physiological factors. We used this to introduce the CBT model- about how all four components interact to produce and maintain depression.

We then spent some time looking at how to break the cycle of depression. According to the CBT model, depression can be tackled at the levels of behaviours (e.g. activity scheduling- planning a balance of meaningful and enjoyable activities), physical wellbeing (e.g. medication, having a routine, including regular meals and sleep) and thinking (e.g. identifying and challenging unhelpful thoughts). The participants got a chance to explore activity scheduling and practice the concept by planning the rest of their day to get some practice at planning balanced activities for their wellbeing (including food, rest, entertainment, physical exercise and social activities). We recommend that the other ways of handling depression be explored and practised with the group and this can be done by using the worksheets we provided.

Self-esteem and Shame

Both of these topics were extremely important and very relevant to the needs of the participants. We covered these topics in an experiential way that enabled people to connect with the material in a personal way. From our experience, it emerged that participants would benefit from exploring these topics at considerable depth over a number of sessions.

We introduced the idea of shame (a normal emotion which can become very disturbing and certain aspects of traumatic experiences make people feel very ashamed) and the concept of an internal judge (an aspect of ourselves that is very critical, that only attends to the negative). In small groups we then asked participants to explore shame and the idea of the internal judge.

It was clear from the results of this exercise that all of the participants felt a high degree of shame and that they all had a strongly negative aspect of themselves that was very critical and blaming.

We then introduced the concept of self-esteem and sources of self-esteem and put people in small groups to explore these further. Finally, we asked them to draw their internal judge and after a discussion, we then asked them to create an image of their internal “protector.” The results of this exercise were interesting. Whereas all the participants were able to talk about shame and about this internal aspect, which is very negative, it was much harder for them to actually “own it” when it came to the drawing exercise. Clearly, this would be an important step in the therapeutic process before they could begin to learn how to fight shame.

As mentioned above, there are a number of other topics that would have been relevant to the participants and are likely to be relevant to most of the women coming through the Shelter and thus could be incorporated into a workshop programme. For example, dissociation is frequently found in people who have been traumatised and it is an automatic coping behav-

jour that enables people to survive very traumatic events but can become habitual and thus, maladaptive. There are a number of ways that people can learn to cope with it and manage it better. In the pack provided there is information on dissociation and a planned workshop session. Another important topic is coping with crisis and overwhelming emotions—times at which people can engage in self-harm. Participants can be helped to explore alternative ways of coping with these emotions. Suicide is another topic, which though difficult to raise, it can be very useful to explore with people who are depressed and have been traumatised.

Feedback

Each person attending the workshops was asked to complete an evaluation form at the end of each workshop. These forms had been translated into the relevant languages. The evaluation form enquired about: enjoyment of the workshop, relevance of material, usefulness of the materials, as well as asking about likelihood of the participants using the material in the future. Participants were also asked how the workshop could have been improved.

Overall, the women who attended gave very positive feedback on all the workshops. The material covered met their needs and they found the relaxation exercises particularly useful. Most women said that they would use some of the things learned.

The professionals who attended also gave some positive feedback, in terms of enjoyment, relevance and usefulness for the future. Staff seemed to appreciate the small group work and some members suggested that more exercises could be used. Informal evaluation by the professionals who attended indicated that the workshops were useful and that some of the material was new or presented in a new way. Staff members were very eager to have access to the material that we used and expressed an interest in using the ideas and concepts in the future.

Reflections on the Psychosocial Work at the Transite Centre

Despite the horrific experiences that the women experienced before arriving at the Shelter, given their continuing mental and physical difficulties and the lack of certainty about their future, we found that, overall, the women at the Shelter were contained. The relationships displayed amongst the women and between the women and the staff, including the policewomen guarding the Shelter, were of warm and physically affectionate. Although we did not understand what was said in Macedonian, it seemed that many of the communications were humorous and affectionate. Thus, we were under the impression that staff had managed to establish a

supportive environment for the women.

When we discussed therapeutic work with the staff at the Shelter and reviewed their written plans it became clear that they did not have a model to conceptualise their understanding of the women's difficulties and needs, and as a result, they did not have a clear plan of the activities and interventions to target these needs. Consequently, the days at the Shelter lacked structure in the form of planned activities or even daily routines of meal times and sleep.

The need for a model to guide the work and activities at the Shelter was recognised by the staff employed by the NGO and IOM and this precipitated the programme of workshops in which we participated, aiming to expose the staff to a variety of conceptualisations and techniques to work with the women.

Unfortunately, we found that staff's attendance to the workshop was inconsistent and that the staff did not make use of the time offered to them for training. We thought of two possible explanations for the staff's attitude to the training. First, staff did not have an uninterrupted time scheduled for training. During our meetings, staff often had to attend to women's needs. Second, in our initial meeting with the staff they appeared defensive about their work and hesitant to discuss our proposals. As the week unfolded we noticed a slight shift in attitude and as we got to learn more about their working conditions, we began to wonder whether their attitude was a reflection of their feelings of insecurity about their position. The staff working at the Shelter is all employed by the NGO on renewable monthly contracts.

The staff's working arrangements could also account for the lack of a model and structure to their work with the women. The staff running the service consists of two teams of a psychologist and a social worker who work twelve-hour shifts. During the shift, they are responsible for all of the women's needs therefore, apart from being therapists, they also have the role of care/support workers. There appeared to be no regular, scheduled time for clinical, individual and group supervision, all of which are essential when carrying psychotherapeutic work particularly with traumatised clients. Supervision would also provide staff with the opportunity to reflect on their work, discuss their conceptualisations, and plan suitable interventions and activities.

The staff told us that the women did not usually request to see them for individual support or counselling. The lack of clarity in relation to the role of the staff might explain this. On the one hand, the women interact

with staff on administrative issues ranging from requests for food products to enquiries about their appointments with the lawyers and police representatives. On the other hand, the staff has been able to create a friendly atmosphere in which women and staff relate to each other as part of a group. In this context, it might be difficult for the women to relate to staff as counsellors.

We would also like to reflect on the issue of safety at the Shelter. In our description of the therapeutic model, we strongly emphasised that safety is essential for the women to be able to begin dealing with their traumatic experiences and take the first steps in rehabilitating their lives. However, during our work there we learnt that the Shelter is located on the top of a neighbourhood renowned for criminal activities and from which they can hear shootings on most nights. This is not an ideal location for a healing place. However, it appears that IOM and the NGO have little influence on the matter.

Recommendations

In our workshop we wanted our interventions to help women at the first stage of recovery from their traumatic experiences. As we explained, the aims of the first stage are to help the female survivors of sex trafficking to establish control over their bodies and their immediate environment in a safe place.

We recommend that the staff at the Shelter continue with this line of work. To that end, attempts must firstly be made to improve issues of safety at the Shelter. Secondly, efforts must be made to improve the women's sense of control by providing them with structured days and helping them re-establish basic sleep and mealtime routines.

Another important issue is to try and reduce uncertainties. The pressing question presented by the women is how long are they going to have to stay at the Shelter. Unfortunately, the staff does not have the answer to this question. However, the staff might be able to reduce some uncertainty about every day issues by, for example, asking other professionals to schedule appointments with the women before coming to visit them at the Shelter.

Daytime psycho-educational workshops could be established to provide women with information about practical, health, and psychological issues. Overall it is remarkable that despite the difficult nature of the work and unfavourable working conditions, the staff manages to establish a

warm and supportive environment. However due to the challenging nature of the work and the level of trauma and emotional difficulties that staff might encounter in their work, it is essential that the staff receive ongoing regular clinical supervision and that support mechanisms be developed for the them.

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Chapter 5

'Self - Portraits'

The Elaboration of an Experience Through a Psychosocial Approach.

30 JUNE - 5 JULY 2003

*NGO Piccolo Principe**

Piccolo Principe Experience: "Autoritratti" ("Self-portrait") – A Way to Elaborate the Experience of Prostitution

"Self-portrait" is a way to elaborate the experience of prostitution that was planned and realized in response to the needs of training peer educators who work in projects which focus on prostitution. "Self-portrait" is linked to the Fenarete project financed by the European Community; the Italian NGO, Committee for the Civil Rights of Prostitutes, runs it, and it has been realized in Italy, France, Holland, Germany, Poland and Lithuania.

The focus and the starting point of a training addressed to these specific peer educators is the elaboration of their own experience of prostitution, in order to make them use their own past experience as point of strength in their profession as peer educators.

The methodology derived in the project has been evaluated as being efficacious and was later extended beyond the specific objective of training

**Piccolo Principe* is an NGO based in Milano, specialized in psychosocial and educational interventions with Street Workers and Victims of Trafficking

peer educators. Thus, it has become a valid tool for those former or current sex workers, who want to elaborate their own experience with accompaniment. We named the project, “Self-portrait,” and it has been used with migrant women, sex workers, and former sex workers, thus becoming a way to both elaborate the prostitution experience and the migration experience, primarily as victims of trafficking in human beings.

“Self-portrait” intends to accompany the women as they consider how they think and feel about their experience, focusing, in particular, on the following questions:

- Are there any points of weakness and of strength in the experience?
- Is that experience regarded as part of their life, as a way to better know themselves, the others, and their reality? Or do they prefer to forget that experience, to deny it, or to hide it?

The objective of the project, “Self-portrait,” is to recognize the importance of all experience, in spite of its painful and negative nature. During the workshop, every woman can tell part of her story and listen to those of others. In this way, every woman allows herself to express the experience, to vocalise it, to position it in the past, to examine it, and to recognize both its negative and positive aspects in order to draw elements of strength for herself.

The ability to recognize negative aspects or painful feelings, to acknowledge their existence and to realise that they form part of our own store of personal experience, potentially can become a method of avoiding negation mechanisms and learning how we can transform our points of weakness into very important information about ourselves. One of the most important goals is encouraging the recognition of the continuity of one’s own life, understanding that it consists of different lived experiences, and coming to see, at the end, a continuity in one’s self/identity.

Extremely important in the management of “Self-portrait” are the techniques suiting:

- the personal characteristics of the participants
- the characteristics of the themes suggested and dealt with
- the objectives of the training

Verbal, drawing and writing techniques are used.

As for the narration (verbal techniques) of personal experiences that are extremely involved, it is important to stimulate the free expression of the women's own emotions, without grammatical obstacles (that is why drawing could be the most appropriate technique). Becoming aware of themselves and their own experience of prostitution, of migration, and of being a victim of trafficking is neither immediate nor painless. Drawing can help a person to convey thoughts and feelings which otherwise could remain unexpressed. Starting from a drawing can make it easier to get gradually in contact with one's own experience, because the trainer gives different input, asking the individual to elaborate on some particular aspects. This methodology helps people to reorganize their experiences, making the shift from drawing to telling easier and less anxious.

What follows is a list of some drawing and writing techniques used in "Self-portrait":

- At the beginning of the workshop, we suggest that the women draw the shape of their own body, which represents the person as she is "today". This drawing becomes the basis of all the following work, because further aspects that are explored and emerge during the workshop will merge into this shape. Thus the shape becomes the space in which every participant symbolically builds their own present identity through the integration of feelings, experience, and emotions, even those considered to be uncomfortable up to then and not yet collocated.
- At the same time, the women are encouraged to draw their lifeline; the lifeline refers to a horizontal line symbolizing the time of one's own existence – from birth to the present – on which the most important and significant aspects or events are pointed out. This drawing helps to stress the continuity of their identity, which is built over the years on the basis of experiences and events. Years or periods connected to significant moments, even those moments one wants to forget, exist graphically on the lifeline and this helps one to "see" one's past integrated into the present.

Preliminary Information about the Transit Centre for Victims of Trafficking in Macedonia. Adjustment of the Project “Autoritratti” (“Self-Portrait”)

Preliminary Information Received

The Transit Centre for Victims of Trafficking hosts about 30 women maximum. The women reside there for the amount of time required to see the repatriation procedures through, or to respond to investigative inquiries or legal needs.

Working together with a local non-governmental organization (NGO) IOM gives:

- Psycho-social assistance
- Medical assistance
- Legal assistance
- Assistance during the repatriation process by coordinating social integration programs in the woman’s country of origin.

The local NGO, “For A Happy Childhood,” consisting of professional women, psychologists, and social assistants, operate at the Transit Centre.

Request

IOM Skopje requested that we focus on two objectives in tailoring our project to the specific context:

- Creating a module-workshop aimed at the elaboration of experience through a psychosocial approach. The workshop should run daily activities, which should be scheduled so as to reach the greatest possible number of beneficiaries, in a protected and discreet space (in so far as the Centre’s needs allow), and should offer every woman who has started the workshop the opportunity to complete it.
- Helping the NGO psychosocial team to elaborate a conceptual model of a workshop they could use and repeat within the activities of the Centre; in order to do that, the psychosocial team had to attend the initial workshop, either as observers or as helpers.

First Reflections

According to the preliminary information received and the requests expressed, we pointed out some issues for reflection related to:

Women's Participation in the Workshop

In order to create the workshop's structure, we had to take into consideration, on the one hand, the most appropriate number of participants suitable for the proposed activity (at first we thought about a maximum of 15), and on the other hand, how we could offer the chance to take part to the greatest possible number of women in the Centre.

Further preliminary information suggested that the hosted women could hardly attend the workshop regularly, due to other peculiar activities of the Centre that could not have been foreseen in advance. This point was extremely important because it is not recommended to open delicate subjects that could not be adequately managed and closed, if the participants departed or stopped attending.

Kinds of Experiences Lived by the Hosted Women

The experience elaboration through the "Self-portrait" methodology made us think about what kinds of experiences the women would talk about and, more importantly, what kind of concrete positive effects the narration of individual stories of trafficking could bring about. According to us and to the Skopje program officer – with whom we discussed these topics by email– the main objective was to provide a safe space where the free expression of experiences was possible, without anyone feeling either obliged or revictimized. Furthermore, we also had to take into account that it could be too early for women, who had only just recently emerged from a traumatic situation, to begin working on the elaboration of their experiences

Time Available for the Workshop

According to the Centre's daily activity schedule and to an evaluation of the women's actual capacity to concentrate on themes that could cause anxiety, we were asked by the program officer to work no more than two hours per day, resulting in a total of 12 hours for the whole workshop.

That was a critical point concerning the workshop's structure; at the beginning, we felt it limited our ability to properly run our activities. This time constraint ultimately necessitated that we determine our priorities when choosing the themes to deal with, the activities to do, and the overall way

of running the workshop in order to ensure that every single woman had enough time to express herself within the group.

The Management: Two Trainers

As a consequence of the above-mentioned points and after considering the delicacy of the general and the individual situations involved, we thought it necessary to have two trainers present. The presence of two trainers is always a point of strength for the management of a group. In this case, the doubled amount of attention to group dynamics, combined with the opportunity for the trainers to discuss and manage the themes explored in the group together, could be extremely effective.

Steps Towards the Definition of the Final Program

Definitions of First Elements of Structure

The first elements of structure were defined in terms of: objectives, methodology, the type of group, ways of management, NGO team participation, and time planning.

Individual objectives of the workshop:

- Pointing out which experiences were felt as traumatic within one's entire personal experience;
- Elaborating the traumatic experiences in order to integrate them into one's own identity (recognizing the space within one's own identity where one can collocate these experiences);
- Identifying personal resources to be used when faced with going back to one's country of origin, after having integrated the traumatic experiences within one's own identity;

Relational or shared objectives of the group work:

- Offering a space for general listening;
- Offering a comfortable way of listening to the narration of traumatic experiences;
- Offering opportunities for discussion, exchange, and reciprocal support;
- Offering an opportunity to build solidarity in the living situation: among the participants and with the trainers.

Foreseen activities:

- Drawing one's own body shape during the initial phase (presentation); it will be used during the whole workshop, becoming the concrete symbol of one's own present identity;
- Drawing one's own lifeline focusing on some significant moments linked to the trauma.

Methodology/techniques/modality:

- Guided tale aimed to identify trauma and to elaborate it;
- Symbolic expression through drawings of one self perceived identity, of trauma experienced, and of its elaboration;
- Cognitive elaboration of traumatic elements emerging during the telling; the changing of the body shape drawing materializes the result of the elaboration;
- Management who take care to create a welcoming environment, mutual recognition, reciprocal exchange, and free discussion

Group making

The number of women hosted in the Centre and the consequent reflections about this, made us decide to offer two daily workshops, in order to make two smaller and better managed groups, without excluding anybody willing to participate.

Furthermore, the work was based, fundamentally, on free and spontaneous participation, and not at all on compulsory participation. It was necessary that every participant could autonomously decide if she wanted to be there, according to accurate information concerning the workshop's objects and methodology offered in advance? We assumed the participants' recruitment would be based on long-distance collaboration with the NGO local team, who were in charge of suitably informing and promoting the workshop to the women, thus enabling the Centre's residents to make a free and informed choice about participation in it.

Group management and NGO participation:

- Every group was to be managed by two trainers.
- NGO social workers and psychologists could have an active role as observers; this could be very useful to evaluate the work in progress. For this reason, we suggested daily meetings, outside the workshop time, to discuss the ongoing process.

Timing:

- Two hours per day; six days per group
- One hour per day for meetings with NGO social workers and psychologists

Definition of the First Elements of the Setting

We took into account the elements of the setting and the necessary material.

Place for the activity:

- Comfortable and emotionally warm;
- Reserved (a sheltered and locked room, at least during the workshop time);
- Large enough to allow every participant to put at least two drawings on the wall;
- Chairs (the more comfortable the better) in a circle (without benches);
- Bright.

Materials Needed:

- A lot of colours felt-tip pens;
- Very large sheets of paper, like wrapping paper, (at least 2 per participant);
- Blackboard or presentation board (to hold sheets of paper);
- Smaller paper (A4 size);
- Glue;
- Adhesive tape for papers.

First Draft of the Program

For the first idea of the program, our thoughts focused on the possibility of working on those experiences the women considered to be traumatic. The objectives were:

- a) leading the participants to become aware of some elements of trauma, including those that were:

- visible, in terms of visible external signs (wounds, disabilities);
- invisible, in terms of inner signs (fear, lack of esteem, sense of failure, feeling guilty, aggressiveness, distrust,...)

b) leading the participants to elaborate personal strategies for facing problematic relationships which they may encounter on their return home, by confronting the once abandoned external world that had been found again. This confrontation could make the woman feel that she is in a different position from the one she used to experience when she migrated.

Ways and techniques foreseen in the program were:

- drawing one's own body shape in order to describe "how I am now";
- graphically representing and subsequently narrating the "worst" experience during the migration time;
- analysing the recounted experience in order to point out visible and invisible elements;
- role playing based on subjects such as relationships with others and the managing of visible and invisible signs of trauma;
- defining personal strategies and alternative behaviours which differ from those expressed during the role playing.

However, such a program of activity did not properly answer the points of reflection previously mentioned, including:

- The time available – 12 hours per group – and the uncertainty about the participants' continuity of attendance were elements that made us concerned that we could not assure the necessary conditions for a positive and fruitful reflection about the traumatic experience. We could not run the risk of starting a process of exploration, helping to bring out painful elements, and then, find ourselves unable to realize the closing phase where we could contain and elaborate what had taken place.
- The uncertainty about the number of participants – the more participants, the less time we could devote to each of them. With such a workshop structure, with 15 women per group, we could not assure proper management.

- Good group cohesion – a useful requirement for self-help exercises - was necessary for the proposed work. We thought that the women being forced to live together at the Shelter did not positively support the work because the participants could experience dynamics and conflicts during the workshop, which could not be successfully managed during its limited time, and could “flow over” into other parts of their community life.
- Since Centre guests come from different countries, we were concerned that they might have had difficulties talking to each other. This was problematic because mutual aid was very important for the workshop structure we had planned, as far as the definition of effective behavioural strategies was concerned.

The workshop structure described above could not have been realized in Skopje because of the limited time available. Nonetheless, we believe that such an activity could be very useful for the women hosted at the Transit Centre. If you paid attention to the above-mentioned elements and sorted out the critical points described, you can realize that such a kind of process does not solely aim to elaborate the traumatic experience, but also to help women set out behavioural strategies which could be effective once back home.



Final Program

According to the above-mentioned considerations and to discussions with the program officer in Macedonia, the workshop structure had to be modified in order to address, at least, the following individual objectives:

- Identifying every participant's personal perceived identity;
- Sketching out experience elements that compose the present identity;
- Increasing the value of personal resources pointed out during the process.

Thus, we believed we could accompany the participants in the process of building their present self-perception, leaving them free to decide individually which of their experience to utilise in their presentation, instead of leading them towards the exploration of possible traumatic experience.

Furthermore, we thought to answer to the critical issue of participants' discontinuity by working out a workshop structure divided into daily units which, though unified by one guiding thread, were, at the same time, complete in themselves. Every unit of work had a specific subject, its own specific phase of exploration, expression, analysis, and evaluation, and its own closure. In such a way, even women who could participate at intervals could avoid the feeling that a piece of work on their selves was incomplete. The guiding thread for the whole workshop was the creation of the self presentation focused on the following thematic areas dealt with day by day:

Day 1

Presentation: "What others see of myself" (visible elements)

Day 2

Presentation: "What is present in my head today" (invisible elements: thoughts, expectations, projects)

Reflections about "Why these things are present in my head today" (possibility of finding reasons and causes drawn from personal experience)

Day 3

Presentation: "What is present in my heart today" (invisible elements: emotions, affection)

Reflection about: "Why there are these things are present in my heart today" (possibility of finding reasons and causes drawn from personal experience)

Day 4

Presentation "What is in my hands today" (invisible elements: abilities, resources, ways to face situations)

Reflection about: “why are these things in my hands” (possibility of finding reasons and causes drawn from personal experience)

Day 5

Presentation of a brief story “representing myself”, with the free choice of using a fictional character and of using elements sorted out during the previous days

Day 6

Reflection about self-image sorted out in the workshop process: which elements were already known, which ones were discovered. Reflection about the possible ways of using this information

Final Evaluation of the Workshop Experience

The techniques we thought to use were: drawing the body shape and later analysing any single part. Then, from the second day on, we would ask the participants to add, to the original drawing, any particular aspect sorted out during the process. After drawing and writing, there would be an oral description, that’s to say an occasion to talk about oneself, led by the trainers in order to: avoid digression, protect the narrator, and make it easier for the investigation by stressing further meanings. In this phase, other participants would be stimulated to listen to, to question, and to give feedback about what, in the narration, had caught their attention. This process aimed to promote group exchanges of reciprocal recognition.

We kept unchanged, though the modified workshop structure, the earlier stressed elements concerning:

- Making the Group
- Group management and NGO participation
- Timing
- Place of activity
- Material

Context Analysis in the Field

Hypothesis Confirmed

Some of the preliminary information received was confirmed during the workshop time directly at the Transit Centre. Immediately, the element of the participants’ discontinuity was evident, due both to their varying motivation to take part and to their involvement in other activities and other

commitments (for example: sanitary inspections or meetings with lawyers or with the judge). Also the element of workshop time available remained unchanged according to preliminary information. These confirmations made us think that the structure of the final program was properly planned.

Hypothesis Disconfirmed

The participants' recruitment was organized the very same afternoon the workshop began and the trainers directly managed it in the presence of some of the NGO team practitioners. This change in the planned program (according to our hypothesis workshop promotion and enrolment should have been realized by the NGO team some days in advance) caused:

- one positive effect: women hosted in the Centre had the chance to meet and get us to know before deciding whether to take part to the workshop or not. This element is not to be under-valuated in terms of the possibility for the participants to value their decision according to their feeling with the trainers
- one effect to be considered for the future: the information on the proposed program did not have enough time to settle; the women did not have the chance to ask the NGO team workers for help in the decision making process. This would have been possible if the proposed program had been presented at least some days earlier.

When the workshop took place, the number of women hosted at the centre was lower than usual and lower than we expected according to the information received. In that week, 14 women were present at the Shelter. Thus, it was not necessary to split the group into two, since the total number of women was even less than the number we proposed should be in one group.

The room where the workshop took place (it was the biggest room available, but it included the kitchen) did not properly conform to the requirements for logistic reasons. Our evaluation of the room was mixed.

- It was certainly a welcoming and agreeable place, with decorated walls giving a warm atmosphere
- There was a hi-fi stereo giving a pleasant music background sound to the drawing work
- However, it could not be a reserved and protected place, even during the workshop time, since it included such a collective place as the kitchen. The door was locked and the workshop timetable was externally posted in order to ask for silence and discretion. However, the kind of place suggested to the other women that they were "allowed" to enter, disguising their unspoken wish to interrupt, disturb, show off, without deciding whether to take part or not in the activities.

- The room was wide enough to permit freedom of movement and avoid overcrowding during the drawing work; in spite of having walls with big windows, all the participants found space to hang their shape. The wideness of the room allowed all to sit in a big circle.
- The room was very bright thanks to walls with windows.

The very good relationship between the women guests and the NGO professional team was immediately very clear. The women hosted in the centre showed, since the presentation of the program, their commitment to actively involving the NGO professional team. From the very first workshop day, the psychologists and social workers showed their desire to participate and take risks and to play a more active role rather than being just observers. Their attitudes were very cooperative, respectful of the trainers' work, and not intrusive to the group dynamics. We did not ignore these significant elements, and we altered our idea concerning the professional workers' role, to become helpers rather than simple observers.

Evaluation

We want to state some aspects, which we considered to be significant regarding the training experience, as far as the following themes are concerned:

- Difficulties experienced by the participants;
- The group as a resource;
- The approach proposed by the trainers;
- The trainers' choice in managing the participants' fictional stories;
- The participants' evaluation of the workshop.

Difficulties Experienced by the Participants

The first difficulty arose during the process of choosing rules for the group (we call this process: classroom agreement) that would put every participant at their ease. We consider this an indispensable tool of work because it allows the participants to express desires and expectations, which enables an agreement among all the members of the group to be reached. Moreover, it is the primary occasion to instil in participants that is most important, apart from the workshop content, to cultivate a good working atmosphere among the group and the group well being.

The participants had trouble understanding our proposal; after some minutes of silence, they asked what we meant. We thought that the difficulty was linked to the fact that they were not used to working in groups and, in particular, they were not used to having an active role in the creation of a

good atmosphere. Being an active actress implied that everyone was responsible both in the creation of explicit and shared rules, and in the keeping of those rules in order to maintain a good group atmosphere. We thought this to be an important point of reflection: beginning a workshop with a good deal of time devoted to setting shared rules of living together could be learned by the participants as a new way which could be used outside the workshop activity.

Once the initial difficulty had been overcome, the participants chose and shared 3 rules of living: reciprocal respect, kindness, and honesty. From the chosen rules, it was clear that their biggest worry was to be mocked. We think it is interesting to stress that, once the participants realized what they were being asked, they were very straightforward; that is to say, they identified the critical point - being mocked - and they focused their attention on this. That was a sign of sincerity, the capacity to analyse the situation and their desires, and the ability to aim directly achieving the objective.

As trainers, we suggested the change of only one of the proposed rules: honesty became speaking the truth about what they wanted to say, without being obliged to speak. Furthermore, we added the rule of confidentiality regarding the content coming out of the group.

In spite of the limited time available, the participants understood perfectly the meaning of the classroom agreement; the day after they explained it to the new comers in a precise and efficacious way.

The second difficulty encountered by the participants was the comprehension of general categories. Before asking them to draw what they perceived in the different parts of the body, we asked them to identify general categories conventionally located in those parts of the body we were going to analyse. For example, we asked, "What kinds of things are present in your head?" We wanted to stimulate a process of abstraction, in other words, the shift from one's actual experience to a general and abstract category: from, "In my head, there is my family as it used to be when I was at home," to the category of "memories". We realized that these shifts were not easy for the participants; since we did not take their understanding for granted, we help them by making some examples. The difficulty in using a way of thinking like abstraction was a sign of their medium to low cultural level and their propensity for using mostly pragmatic and inductive ways of elaboration.

The third difficulty arose from the question, "What do you have in your hands?" We meant to help draw out the participants' sense of their own abilities, capacities, and skills. But they did not recognize that they had any. They were not able to draw from their formal or informal working experience any learned abilities. Thus they could not point out their individual competences.

What we noticed is confirmed by similar occurrences in other workshops;

the importance of devoting much more time to helping women analyse their own skills. The process of creating the awareness needed to recognize that any experience allows for the development of personal skills, which can be later used (and to realize what the skills they developed in their working experience are), should be much longer and more complex.

It is necessary to lead the women gradually through the analysis of their working experiences (even those informal ones, which are usually unconventional and socially neglected), and to try to avoid the instinctual and immediate tendency to completely reject an experience when it is characterized by painful and/or stigmatised elements, actions, or results. Only an analytical process allows for the drawing out of what could be learnt, practical, and useful in such a rejected and “rejectable” working experience as prostitution.

Given these considerations and the limited time available, we thought that the participants would recognize only their general domestic abilities (i.e., cooking, looking after children, sewing...) and personal skills (singing, drawing...). We think that the participants had many more skills than the ones emphasized, but, because of the planned program structure, we could not take enough time to help them to identify the competences they learned as migrants, as sex workers, and in other life experiences. This interesting point must be underlined: within a process of taking possession of oneself again – in order to face one’s origin country again – it might be useful to create ways of enabling the women to realize those capacities, skills, and abilities that they have learned through informal activities. These competences are a very important resource that could be used in their search for a new, different, and more formalized job.

Group and Individual Activities. Integration of Resources

Our working experience at the Transit Centre confirmed for us the idea that, inside such a kind of shelter, it might be interesting and effective to conduct both individual and group activities. These activities should be co-ordinated within a more complex frame, paying attention both to interpersonal, group dynamics and subjective, individual dynamics. The coordination of these kinds of activities could allow the achievement of different and integrated objectives, which focus always on the person, both in individual and group activities. In such a way, the risk of offering different quality, but isolated activities could be avoided.

The individual activities focus on the person (her own situation, her own difficulties...) without relationship interferences. But those related to the “help-relationship” with the professional worker could enable the individual to concentrate on “theorizing” about her own problems and on identifying personal strategies to face them. Group activities make possible the confrontation between the self and the others, the creation of a more intense

contact producing emotional exchanges and reciprocal recognitions, the realization of solidarity and support, and, furthermore, the chance to experiment, within a protected space, expressing “strong” relationship feelings (anger, envy, jealousy, powerlessness) and properly managing them.

The thoughtful and integrated coexistence of individual and group activities would offer, to the professional team in charge of the women hosted at the Centre, the chance to get to know important information regarding reactions, feelings, and behaviours exhibited by the women in different contexts. The shift between individual “theory reflection” and group “experimentation” could be much more functional and fluid, avoiding any placing on or any contraposition among different help relationship contexts. Considering the specificity of the Transit Centre and the specific life experience of its guests, we think that group activities could be regarded as an example of an alternative way of living: solidarity instead of exploitation, true emotional exchange instead of violence, support instead of solitude and fear.

What follows are two examples that happened during the workshop and exemplify the above-mentioned aspect. The work on the heart made the participants recognize and name the emotions they felt at that moment and brought about an intense exchange of feelings and support. Suffering and painfulness came out, but also specific aspects of some individual stories: feeling weak, being afraid of telling friends and relatives what happened, worries, and anxiety about the future, coexistence inside the heart of opposing feelings (generosity and jealousy, hate and love, suffering and joy). The atmosphere of this meeting was relaxed and intimate. Good group collaboration was developed. During the daily meeting with the NGO team, the psychologists and the social workers who were present at the workshop stressed how the participants had openly showed their feelings and how they had succeeded in creating a confidential atmosphere. Moreover, they underlined how the group collaboration was very good, and how the participants looked relaxed at the end of the workshop.

The second example concerned the day when the participants wrote their stories. At the end of every reading, some of them spontaneously spoke up, offering their impressions, comments, suggestions and encouragement, emphasizing one aspect or another, and telling what they felt after listening to that story. It was a very intense and pleasant exchange; they said important things; they supported each other truly.

This information, related to group activities, seemed to contrast with the women’s aggressive or quarrelsome behaviour exhibited during the every-

day activities of involuntary co-habitation. This information is very important and is a “public” resource that could be used during individual support activities/counselling.

Furthermore, both examples demonstrated how the group can be a space where empathy among peers and reciprocal support could be truly experienced; the group can be also a space where the confrontation between one’s personal experience and other people’s can help bring an understanding of both one’s uniqueness and the possible similarities among human situations and conditions. These aspects are specific characteristics of group activities; individual supporting activities do not aim to such objectives, and, thus, do not get such results. For this reason, the integration between these two instruments (adequately organized and coordinated, and in no way improvised) can lead the women hosted at the shelter to live a more complete and deep experience.

Significant Elements in the Approach Proposed by the Trainers

The methodology used during the workshop was articulated in the following actions:

- Giving inputs for reflections on specific, limited content;
- Asking for the reflections stimulated by the drawing to be made explicit;
- Asking for descriptions of the drawings in the total group;
- Asking for open discussions about the emerged reflections in the total group;
- Asking for daily feedback about their evaluation of the meeting and about their psychological and physical condition at the end of the workshop.

Such an approach was based, firstly, on a clear definition of the workshop’s objectives and consequent detailed planning of every single meeting and, secondly, on additional daily planning according to the previous meeting’s results. This approach could assure the workshop’s content and objectives; and could also guarantee a link between one meeting and the next, between the content that came out during different meetings, and between different moods encountered from time to time.

We suggested the drawing instrument for different reasons:

- In order to enliven the workshop by avoiding exclusively verbal activities;
- Because it makes expression easier despite linguistic difficulties;

- Because it is a way of expression which helps reflection and synthesis;
- Because it becomes a mirror where one can look at oneself;
- Because it remains, afterward, as a product.

During the first day the participants looked embarrassed because they were not used to drawing. But the initial embarrassment was easily overcome, also thanks to the collaboration of the NGO team representatives. The activity took place in an atmosphere of joyfulness, relaxation, and concentration. During the following meetings, the embarrassment disappeared and the participants really appreciated proposed openness of expression; this was a sign that they felt it adequate and within their reach. We managed the description and the discussion in the total group in a guided way, asking for feedback and for explanations. Feedback allowed us to verify that the participants comprehended and made sense of what had been said, and allowed us to communicate to the speaker that active and shared listening is taking place. Requesting for explanations intends to clarify and to search for a deeper meaning of what had been said.

The NGO team felt that our way of management was straightforward and concrete. We think that being direct, clear, and concrete is necessary to avoid misunderstanding and to help people to question themselves on the meaning of what they are saying. Our idea is that through the workshop we can exemplify a way of reflection that can be used in other ways; the process of personal reflection thus activated goes beyond the training context.

A further instrument used for managing the workshop was the classroom agreement and a general attitude based on agreement. Such a tool is useful for making clear, shared and explicit agreements both within the total group and with every single participant. The contract allows any participant and the total group to express their needs and desires, to see that they are taken into consideration, to see them confronted with reality, and to look for shared solution, which, once found, can be transformed into a reciprocal agreement. The contract permits a clear understanding of which are the trainers' responsibilities and which are the participants' ones. In such a way the participants assume an active role, and a specific level of responsibility in the success of the activity. The level of involvement and participation grows, without giving up the trainers' role and duties.

Management of Participants' Fictional Stories

According to the planned program, the fifth day was dedicated to the creation of individual stories, made from the elements of the shape and with the reflections of the previous days and whose protagonist was supposed to be a fictional character.

We questioned how to present this activity without making it too banal, in order that the stories, though fictional, could be significant and representative of every participant's identity. We chose to open the fifth day with our feedback about the most important aspect of each participant that we had noticed thus far. We decided to ask them about the correctness of our understanding, and after having agreed about it, we wanted to ask them to use those elements as the plot of their stories.

Our choice was based upon two important factors:

- We noticed that the work already done had made clear a sort of guiding thread characterizing each participant. Our feedback sought to protect the guiding thread that had emerged.
- Participants had already asked, several times, for our observations; probably because through the activities they had introduced themselves to us, and we had remained spectators until then. Thus, we thought that it was time to give everyone some feedback about what we had observed and listened to.

The way through which we gave our feedback was analytical and was based on the collection of what every participant expressed by drawing, descriptions, and group discussion. Having two trainers made this collection easier, because we could keep precise notes about every participant's statements. In the management of each meeting, one of us directly managed the activity, while the other took notes about everything that happened and was being said. In this way, we could report both the drawings and the words said by the participants, thus avoiding any sort of interpretation.

What follows are the feedbacks and the threads suggested for the creation of the stories:

I. was always present; the guided thread that represented her was the division between beauty and ugliness: she divided every part of her shape taken into consideration into beautiful and ugly aspects. Additionally, she told us how she used to be discriminated against and how she did not receive any help. Thus, her goal was to help others and get rid of evil. We suggested the following plot to her, "How happy will your character be in life, who owns

both beautiful and ugly things?"

J. was very young; she was always present; all her attention was focused on her family, which was the central element, in terms of her homesickness, sense of lacking, and future project. She thought that everybody is important in the family, but children deserved particular attention. Her desire is to help children, for example, by working as a nurse. The plot suggested was, "What is your character doing to make children happy?"

D. was very young; she was always present; her guiding thread was her sense of being little. She wanted to go back to her family, be looked after, go on holiday, and not think about future for a while. She said the truth harboured in her mind and that the truth was what stopped her from living her adolescence. As feedback we told her that there was truth inside herself, that truth was painful, that truth had broken up her adolescence, and that she wanted to find a way to take back her lost time. We suggested the following plot, "What will your character do when she returns home?"

V. is very young; she was always present; her guiding thread was being pragmatic and determined. As feedback we told her that there was a break in her life; that she wanted to start again from the moment when her life broke up; that she recognizes her capacity of choice; that she thought about the future both with positive feelings and nervousness. Her plot was, "What are the difficulties your character can meet during his/her future project? How can s/he be helped?"

D. was always present; her guiding thread was the coexistence of opposing feelings. As feedback we told her that she showed herself to be sweet and tender, that she told us she felt inside herself both generosity and jealousy, suffering and joy, and the both desire to embrace and to kill. We told her that life and experience could cause the coexistence of elements apparently in opposition and we suggested the following plot, "How can you help your character, who will never kill anyone, to protect herself from bad people she could meet in the future?"

G. was present at two meetings; the aspects sorted out were that she wanted to build a family to make herself happy and she recognized her skills for this project. The plot was, "How can you help your character to properly use her skills?"

V. was present at two meetings; her guiding thread was that she wanted to lead her life with her own hands; the plot suggested was, "What kind of life does your character have, both in positive and negative aspects?"

I. was present at one meeting; she recognized her skills to work and to earn what she needed for living; her plot was: “how can you help your character to find a job? Which kind of job does she do? What sort of life does she live?”

A. was present at one meeting; she appeared to be a very talented person; her plot was, “How can you help your character to develop her talent and make it important for her life?”

Workshop Evaluation by the Participants

The last workshop day was dedicated to its evaluation; we proposed that the participants discuss the following:

- What do you think we should have done during these days?
- What was it good or bad?
- What was it amusing or boring?
- If you should describe it to someone else, how would you present it?

Here follow some statements from the participants:

J. “We drew about ourselves, we wrote about our family, we drew our hearts and wrote what happened in our hearts, drew our hands and wrote what they could do.”

I. “We worked on ourselves, on every single part, with your help. I found a balance and I learnt things about myself that I did not know before.”

D. “In these days I did something that I had never done in my life.” I drew what we can do with our hands, spoke about reasons, and about work. I was happy to be here.”

Regarding what was going well or badly, what was amusing or boring, the participants stressed out that:

- Two hours per day were not enough; they would have been available for working harder;
- One of them the suggested work was too easy and she would have preferred something more difficult.

They appreciated:

- Having learned something about themselves;
- Having had the chance to talk about what was linked to every single part;
- Having had the feeling that their thoughts were free;

- Perceiving themselves in an easier way;
- Drawing;
- Opening their hearts;
- Having respected rules;
- The friendly group atmosphere.

How the Workshop's Results Were Presented:

The participants were divided into three sub-groups, and they worked together to create and share a presentation. In this way the presentations showed how the participants correctly understood the planned workshop structure, the daily structure, and the way everything was managed.

Discussions with the NGO Team

We planned several meetings with the NGO team in order to present the workshop to them before it started, to discuss it while it was progressing, and to make a final evaluation. At the first meeting we described the workshop's objectives and methodology and asked what they thought about it, but they did not say anything. We felt that the team was overworked at that time, and thus, they were not particularly willing to start an additional new activity. Then we proposed arrangements regarding: the workshop's timetable, on-going evaluations of the workshop with the team, team participation, and team members' roles during the workshop.

During meetings in the midst of the workshop, some interesting observations of our work and of the women's behaviour were made. The NGO team emphasized and appreciated our proposed approach, in particular the relationship based on agreement, the straightforward attitude, the search for deeper meanings, and the opportunity to alternate between drawing and talking. Regarding the participants' involvement, the team noticed that they were engaged in the proposed activities, that the atmosphere was collaborative and relaxed, that they trusted both the trainers and the others when showing their feelings, that they maintained a good level of concentration and, finally, that they listened more to each other.

At the final evaluation meeting, the NGO team made the following points:

- The program and objectives fit the situation of the women hosted in the Centre.
- The atmosphere created was conducive for the success of the work.
- A straightforward attitude and requests for feedback at the end of every meeting were considered good ways to stimulate the participants to express their feelings.

- All the women hosted in the shelter took part in the workshop, even if the continuity of their participation varied.
- They expressed interest in observing other ways of training.
- They wish to explore the possibility of reproducing this experience in other daily activities.
- They stressed the importance of on-going discussions about the work in progress.

We wish to point out that the team became more and more involved in the workshop as time passed and that they perceived this activity as something partly new and partly known, meaning that it was not identical to their ordinary activities but quite close to them. The participation of team members was stimulating and was never perceived as an obstacle by the participants, who were neither embarrassed by their presence nor hostile to them. The on-going discussions and the team's presence at the workshop demonstrated the transparency between the trainers and the team and the need for further team involvement. All this made it easier to have concrete and straightforward discussions based on direct observations, actual facts, and confrontations between the workshop and the team's activities. In such a way, the initial diffidence and the feeling of fatigue quickly disappeared and were replaced by a useful and fruitful dialogue. The trainers took the team's reflections and observations into account in the daily planning of the activities.

Evaluation

Our experience confirmed that the organization of the setting and the planning of the workshop structure need to be carefully thought through. As for the setting, the possibility of working in a reserved, separate place allowed for the creation of a confidential atmosphere. This kind of situational arrangement gives the participants a concrete perception of intimacy; being able to lock the door and to have available a protected space allows the outlining of a tangible limit between what belongs to workshop and what belong to the outside. According to us, this aspect is particularly important when the workshop takes place in the same structure where the participants live because in this way the space can be defined and delimited. In our case, the dining-room assumed a different function during some planned times; this was evidently perceived because the door was locked, the tables were put aside, papers and colours felt-tip pens appeared, the chairs were put in a circle, drawings were hung on the walls, and the blackboard was turned up. The same place was transformed and used in a different, special, and confidential way for those who wanted to participate.

As for structure, we think it is very important that workshop organizers create structures suitable to the objectives and the methodologies they want to pursue. In particular, we think that complex subjects should be dealt with in articulated structures, lasting an adequate time, and with a program and a calendar that is shared with and communicated to the participants. In a structure such as the shelter in Skopje, which hosts people for a month on average, it is possible to organize activities that ensure that the workshops consist of more meetings and are arranged within a well-structured setting.

According to what we could observe during our working week in Skopje, we would recommend to the NGO and IOM that the shelter's internal organization could be improved and become more functional and effective by arranging and structuring daily activities to a greater extent, differentiating them, and appointing specific tasks to different NGO members.

If workshops became ordinary activities within the shelter, it would be advisable to attempt to integrate this activity with those related to the women's individual support services (counselling, the care-relationship). Being able to combine the information, behaviour, difficulties, and desires sorted out during the workshop and during individual support would permit assistance to be provided to the person in a more complete and differentiated way. In order to realize this objective, it is necessary, firstly, to assign specific tasks to NGO members to avoid overlaps (for example, a woman being followed by the same social worker both during individual support and during the workshop), and, secondly, to have constant discussion among NGO team members about every single person hosted at the Centre in order to integrate information and manage every single case in an optimal way.

The NGO inclusion in the Transit Center

*NGO For A Happy Childhood**

A Description and Short History of the Association “For A Happy Childhood”

The Association for Support of Families and Children at Risk, called “For A Happy Childhood” began its work on the 17th of February 2000. It consists of 80 active members, 14 professionals and 66 volunteers, including psychologists, social workers, pedagogues, doctors, lawyers and students.

The Target Groups

Children, women, and families at risk; children with behavioral disorders, women and adolescent victims of trafficking, adolescents at risk of addictions; teachers and other professionals and volunteers who work with groups at risk and students of the social sciences who will work in the NGO sector in the future.

**For A Happy Childhood* is a Macedonian Organisation specialized in psychosocial interventions with youth, families and Victims of Trafficking.

The Three Main Priorities of the NGO

- Direct psychosocial assistance, intervention, and therapy for victims of trafficking and other kinds of violence;
- Education of volunteers and professionals to work with at-risk and vulnerable groups;
- Prevention of violence and trafficking.

The Activities of the NGO in the Transit Center in Skopje, Macedonia

In July 2002, the NGO, “For a Happy Childhood” became involved in the work of the Transit Center for Victims of Trafficking in Skopje, Macedonia in order to provide psychosocial support and to be responsible for the daily management of the Center. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) supports the NGO’s projects and activities. The NGO offers different kinds of assistance through a coordinator, a youth counselor, a doctor of clinical psychology and three psychosocial teams each consisting of a psychologist and a social worker.

The work of the three teams includes:

- Initial psychological assistance (composed of a short clinical interview to diagnosis the psychological condition of the victim, the stress level, and any psychosomatic problems);
- Educational activities (workshops to help change behavior, self-perception, and protect the victim from recidivism);
- Therapeutic activities (individual and group therapy);
- Counseling (psychological counseling performed by a doctor of clinical psychology who conducts individual psychotherapy for victims with serious problems);
- Social activities and occupational therapy (sewing, hairdressing, painting, cosmetics, yoga, and English language instruction);
- Rehabilitation activities (preparation for reintegration in the country of origin).

Initial Psychosocial Aid

Initial psychosocial aid is provided to each woman during the first 24 hours after acceptance in the Transit Center, but in cases in which the victim is in bad physical condition, this period can be postponed. This initial aid includes a brief diagnostic interview and an assessment of the victim's stress level and degree of trauma (information which is later used for the preparation of individual work plans for each woman). In addition, the woman is acquainted with the services that are available in the Center.

To estimate the psychological status of the victim and her need for psychosocial aid and therapy, we use the following techniques:

- A short diagnostic interview is used to obtain primary information about the victim (such as her name, birth date, identity, native country, etc.). Besides the general information, this interview reveals information about the psychological state of the victim.
- A test for measuring the victim's stress level is performed.

Using this test, the following information is obtained from the victim:

- Level of stress - A high level is an indicator of existing problems in the victim's personal functioning.
- Source of the stress: Further individual and group work can enable us to discover the more concrete sources of stress;
- Reactions to stress –This can include psychosomatic reactions like allergies, nutritional difficulties, and insomnia, which are indicators of possible long-term consequences of the stressful situation. In the further work with the victims, we follow the psychosomatic reactions and changes in the stress level.

The information received from the diagnostic interview and the stress test are used for:

- Making an individual plan for further activities for each victim;
- Identifying victims who need individual long-term therapy and counseling. These victims work additionally with the psychological counselor;
- Identifying cases that should be referred to a medical doctor and a psychotherapist for eventual pharmaceutical therapy.

Techniques used for obtaining additional information from the victim include:

- **MMPI-Minnesota Multifactor Interview:** a psychological test for diagnosing the psychopathological and psychosomatic symptoms of the victim. This test is used only when the existence of deeper personal difficulties are suspected. According to the results of this test, the victim may be referred to a psychiatrist.
- **Genograms:** a technique that is used for diagnosing the family relations and disturbances. The family tree is made up of three generations of the victim's family. By making a family tree, we receive a lot of information about the victim and their family, such as:
 - Demography – basic information about three generations of the victim's family;
 - Information about family relations;
 - Critical events in the family (deaths, successes, movements, addictions, etc.).

After systematizing the information about the victim's family, we interpret the genogram, according to the following categories:

- Family structure (the members of family, the position of brothers and sisters, and any unusual family relations);
- Significant life events and the family's way of functioning (the ways of handling different life events and problems connected with the family's functioning);
- Family relations and relational triangles (especially the triangle in the relationship between the parents and the child, and in the marriage.)
- Family balance or lack of balance (from the previous analyses, we can establish if there is a balance or a lack of balance in the family. This is determined according to the family structure, its level of functioning, the ways in which money, health, and work are handled, and so on.)

V.G., 19 years old, Romanian victim of trafficking:

- Short diagnostic interview - At the beginning of her stay in the Transit Center, we realized that she had a high level of anxiety, was manifesting nervous behavior and had difficulties concentrating. In addition, she was abusing pills.

- Physical appearance - She had a few injuries on her head and it looked like she got them a few years ago. On her arms, we noticed self-inflicted knife cuts and cigarette burns;
- Stress test- According to the results from the stress test, she was in the highest risk group;
- The sources of stress included:

The long period she had been trafficked (about 2.6 years);
Substance abuse: pills and alcohol;

- Genogram - From this test we realized that V.G. came from a dysfunctional family in which her father was dominant and was an alcoholic. Alcoholism has characterized the past three generations of her family. Her father's alcoholism led to the termination of communications between the family members. Before V.G. left her home, she stopped having contact with her father and sister.

A person with personality disorder and substance abuse problems. Following consultations with the IOM doctor, we decided to seek the opinion of a psychiatrist expert in addiction. On the recommendation of the psychiatrist, V.G. began a pharmaceutical therapy, which was continued in the country of origin.

Group, Educational and Therapeutic Activities

Educational and therapeutic activities are predominantly carried out within a group setting. Group work is a desirable method for working with the victims of trafficking who are residing in the Transit Center for the following reasons:

- A greater number of victims are included in the program and receive psychosocial assistance;
- Utilization of the group has the potential of initiating cooperation and active participation among its members;
- Individuals share experiences and receive group support;
- It is an organized and constructive utilization of time.

Types of groups: Our groups have an "open character;" each resident at the Center chooses, according to her own free will, whether or not she will participate. Therefore, group membership is inconsistent, with the number of participants varying according to the number of victims residing in the Center. The number of group members influences the selection of the methods/techniques used. When there are more than 15 participants, the group

is divided into smaller ones. The groups are constructed according to the distribution of ages among the participants, with ages typically ranging from age 14 to 42.

Structure of the Group Workshops:

- Introductory part: Explanation of the content and dynamics of the workshop and the key terms that will be used. (10-20min)
- Main part: The topic is elaborated with the group. The elaboration takes 40-60 minutes and includes individual work, group work as well as group sharing. Knowing that this is the main part of the workshop, the participants tend to be most active and productive. Depending on the type and the goal of the workshop as well as on the dynamics of the group, adequate methods and techniques are used.
- Final part: Summarization of the work completed (10-20 min.) and relaxation exercises (5 - 15min.)

A therapist and a co-therapist plan and lead the group work. According to the victims' needs and current events, the topics and the time of the workshop can be changed

According to their different goals, the workshops are divided in two groups:

- Group educational and
- Group therapeutic.

Group Educational Activities

Group educational activities are designed to increase the victims' psychosocial and health knowledge and are divided into different subgroups:

- Group educational workshops are used to introduce the therapeutic workshops. The goals of these educational activities are to theoretically explain the topic of the workshop, to define basic terms and to introduce group members to the workshop approach. Educational workshops are held on specific topics, such as adopting and improving communication skills, forming values and value systems, etc.
- Group educational activities have the goals of educating women about their physical health, and teaching them about ways to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV, and to avoid drug abuse. These types of workshops are conducted by an organization called, "For Healthy Options" (HOPS).

Specific activities include:

- Training in self-recognition, recognition of the situation in which the victims find themselves in and identification of possible methods for improvement;
- Training for self-protection from violence, abuse, and trafficking;
- Awareness raising on identifying pimps and their intentions;
- Training on the victim's rights and the right for personal choice in life;
- Training for building a positive self-image;
- Training in health education and healthy sexual relationships;
- Training in communication skills;
- Health education workshops about protection against AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases and drug abuse prevention..

Group Therapeutic Workshops

The basic goal of the group therapeutic activities is to overcome certain individual or group psychosocial problems. These workshops are a continuation of the victims' assistance process already started in the educational activities. Thus far, the program's activities of psychosocial assistance have been given to 300 victims of trafficking. This prior experience has enabled us to identify the topics that are most needed for therapeutic work with victims and the methods that have been proven to be the most successful. Below are listed a few of the topics for the therapeutic activities we have found to be the most beneficial:

- *Team Building workshops.* Their goal is to improve the functioning of the group as a whole. This includes setting up group rules that are accepted by all of its members. These workshops are also used to overcome conflict situations when there are divisions among members of the group who come from different countries, when there are isolated group members, and when new members join the group.

Identified problem: In 2002, the Transit Center received, in a very short period of time, several groups of new victims. Each group had 7 or 8 victims. After their arrival, we identified intolerance among the groups, separation of members according to their country of origin, and a lack of communication between the group members.

Activities undertaken: We created workshops where the members of the groups were divided into smaller subgroups and were given the task of sharing some important characteristics about themselves with the other members, for example, to share their hobby, favorite movie, etc. The reason for creating the subgroups was to mix members who came from different countries. The basic idea was to establish contact between the members and to enable them to get to know each other better. First the contacts were initiated through drinking coffee together, working to create joint birthday gifts, and preparing national food.

Achieved results: The activities just described yielded the following results: improvement of communication between the members of the group; establishment of friendships between group members coming from different countries, and support given to one another in the performance of daily obligations.

Group therapeutic activities about setting personal boundaries

Especially interesting and useful are workshops about setting personal boundaries. A characteristic of victims of trafficking is their inability to establish personal boundaries. Our work concentrated on helping them set such boundaries in order to protect them and prevent them from being hurt again.

Group therapeutic workshops for initiating expressions of emotions

Due to their high level of stress, victims are not in a position to express their emotions. The therapeutic workshops give them an opportunity to express emotions and to handle stress.

The basic terms are elaborated in the educational part of the workshops and emotional conditions are reviewed and defined.

These workshops utilize the group's potential to give support and to share experiences among its members.

Example: L.B., Moldavian, 20 years old, involved in the support program for female victims of trafficking in the Transit Center.

Detected problem: L.B. came to the Center after she was rescued during a police raid. She was in a very difficult psychophysical condition with obvious signs of physical abuse. She acted mentally disorganized and gave confusing answers. First psychological assistance was postponed for two days given her severe psychological condition. Several individual therapy sessions were conducted and she informed the staff that she had been raped.

twice, by different persons; she had also been physically abused because she resisted. When she was talking about the rapes, her voice was without emotion or intonation. Tears were rolling through her face, but she paid no attention to this, nor to her body, which was in a spasm. The case was referred to specialists who continued to work with her individually.

Activities undertaken: After a long period of individual work, she joined the group by her own initiative, but maintained the role of a passive observer. During one of the workshops called, "Water fantasy," we asked the girls to establish contact with their inner selves. Individuals shared their different experiences with the other members of the group, but one of the members shared her experience of being raped. That motivated other members to share their similar experiences. In a very spontaneous way, L.B. took part in the discussion and informed the group that she had had the same experience and all she was feeling was a dull pain. This was the first time that she shared something with the group. This can be identified as the beginning of her healing. The group sensed her neediness and offered her support.

Achieved results: These were initial accomplishments, but L.B. needed to continue with individual and group therapy in order to maintain the achieved improvement and to progress further with her rehabilitation. In the report that was sent to her country of origin, we stated our suggestions about the need for continued therapeutic work with L.B.

Group Workshops for Reducing Internal and Interpersonal Conflicts

The educational part defines basic terms, while the therapeutic part is focused on discovering individual ways of reacting to frustrations and conflicts and resolving them. Due to the victims' powerful frustrations and inner conflicts, we have many cases of self-inflicted injuries. Thus far, in almost 80% of participants, we could identify trace evidence of self-inflicted injuries (acts such as extinguishing cigarettes on their bodies, cutting veins, etc.). Being unable to handle their frustrations, they chose instead to injure themselves. Through the therapeutic workshops, they can learn to identify and recognize frustrations and to overcome conflicts.

We would like to emphasize that we have a special individual and group educational and therapeutic program for minors and it is utilized when needed.

Therapeutic Counseling

The following counseling services are offered to victims of trafficking in the Transit Center:

- Therapeutic Counseling: Individual counseling, intervention, and psychotherapy for the victims with serious psychosomatic problems;
- Cognitive therapy;
- Behavioral therapy (for adolescents and women with significant behavioral problems);

Cognitive therapy (intellectual approach) focuses on identifying twisted conceptualizations, such as: cognitive distortion, negative automatic thoughts and dysfunctional assumptions and works toward the development of new, adaptable and rational forms of cognition.

The behavioral approach is based on the idea that learning some new forms of behavior will lead people to change their general understanding of themselves and surroundings. It includes the:

- Identification of negative thoughts;
- Modification of negative thoughts;
- Identification and modification of dysfunctional assumptions;
- Behavioral experiments;
- Cognitive therapy for anxiety;
- Cognitive therapy for depression; and
- Perspective cognitive therapy.

A psychological counselor works individually with each woman who has a high level of perceptible disorders with psychopathological and psychosomatic symptoms. The counselor will work particularly with underage girls.

The counseling service is open 2 hours per day, 2 days per week. The counselor also works on-call, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. The psychological counselor intervenes in cases involving women with special needs at any given time, and also organizes group therapeutic sessions for multiple individuals with similar problems.

Social Activities – Occupational Therapy

Social activities are offered to the women in the Transit Center. Particular interest has been shown for the creative activities, including: painting, yoga, sewing, knitting, cooking, hairdressing, cosmetics, art therapy, and studying the English language. Taking into consideration the fact that the women have such different backgrounds, it logically follows that the women have different needs; thus the activities organized for them should be varied and adaptable.

These activities:

- Decrease the level of stress and trauma and promotes relaxation;
- Improve group relations and group cohesion;
- Have an educational function due to the practical skills women are learning and enhancing through activities such as tailoring, knitting, hair dressing, painting, etc.);
- Are a productive, structured use of free time;
- Identify skills that women can potentially use in a profession in their country of origin
- Expand the women's skills;

These activities have educational, therapeutic, social, and rehabilitation purposes.

The skills that the women will become equipped with while in the Center will be advantageous when they look for employment in their countries of origin.

Rehabilitation and Preparation for Reintegration

Returning home, for the participants in the program, is an additional source of stress. Their absence from home, the exclusion from their families' lives, their traumatic experiences, a fear of being labeled, and a fear of rejection all influence the psychological state of the victim. Through individual and group work, we try to ease the process of returning and reintegrating the women back into their families' lives and into larger society in general.

The general goals of the workshops are:

- Empowering people's potential so that they can take over the responsibilities of their future lives;
- Offering support for further active reintegration in society, enabling them to be rightful members of their community;

Example: L.E., 30 years old, Russian, participant in the program for psychosocial protection of women victims of trafficking in the Transit Center. Assessment: From the information received following the initial psychosocial help and additional techniques, L.E. was identified as an individual with a personality structure that has outstanding intellectual and creative potential.

Activities undertaken: The woman was particularly interested in health prevention and was trained in this field. Moreover, she was helped to reconstruct her educational and professional background and to write a C.V. Given the victim's interests, we worked to see how it could be possible to use her own experience of being trafficked in order to help other trafficked people in her country and to contribute to a program aimed at the prevention of trafficking. These topics were of interest to a lot of people and during the workshops, many creative ideas were expressed; this made it possible to identify fields of interest in which the women could make a contribution.

- The individual work was directed towards empowering the woman's self-confidence and demonstrating her potential, as well as emphasizing her responsibility for making future life decisions
- The documentation that was given to the origin country contained information about our program's work, about L.E.'s participation in it, as well as our opinions about the direction that the experts, who will follow L.E.'s case, should take in their further work with her.

Achieved results: A few months later, L.E. sent an email to our association and informed us that she had started studying psychology and that she planned to begin working with victims of trafficking in the future.

Daily Management

The teams working in the Center are responsible for its daily management, and this includes:

- Making weekly schedules for the daily activities;

- Making orders for food and hygienic things and fairly distributing these items among the women;
- Participating in the joint preparation of food.

Psychological Anamnesis

The psychological anamnesis is a document written by the psychological team as a part of the psychosocial file made for each woman accommodated in the Center. The psychosocial anamnesis is a report that describes the woman's psychosocial condition when she arrives at the Center, her behavior while residing there, the services she has received, what has been achieved during her rehabilitation, and her capabilities and interests in certain fields.

The psychosocial anamnesis also contains the following information:

- General information – demographic facts about the name, date of birth, country of origin, and period of stay in the Transit Center;
- Social activities and relations – information about the woman's social habits, her individual behavior and her behavior in a group setting;
- Emotional status and reactions to frustration – information about the emotional state and the behavior of the woman upon arrival at the Center, during her stay, and before leaving. The characteristics of her emotions states and her reactions to frustrations are emphasized.
- Activities during her stay – information about the woman's motivation and her participation in the educational and therapeutic activities. In this part, we include information about her special interests and skills.
- Reference – an expert's estimation of the woman's overall condition, which is the basis for continuing the victim's rehabilitation and her integration into society;

This report is prepared shortly before the woman's departure and it is sent along with other relevant documents to IOM's office in the country of origin. This reference section has proven to be very important since it provides information to the appropriate, responsible institutions in the origin country that offer accommodation and/or help for her further rehabilitation and reintegration in the society.