



International Aid Network

2005
Annual report

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARC	American Rescue Committee
BHRN	Balkan Human Rights Network
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BOSPO	Bosnian Aid Council
CAFOD	Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
CC	Collective centre
CIDA	Canadian International Development
CRO	Croatia
CRS	Catholic Relief Service
DOS	Dalmatian Solidarity Committee
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
EU	European Union
FRESTA	Secretariat for Peace and Stability
GF	Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria's
GO	Governmental organisation
EAR	European Agency for Reconstruction
EHO	Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
HPVPI – HIV	Prevention among Vulnerable Populations Initiative
IAN	International Aid Network
KIP	Kosovo Initiative Program
IDP	Internally displaced person
IDU	Injecting drug user
IPH	Institute for Public Health
ISH	Institute for Students Health
JAZAS	Yugoslav Association against AIDS
LIG	Legal Issues Group
MARRI	Migration, Asylum and Refugee Return Initiative
MDM	Medicines du Monde
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OCRM	Office for Communities, Returns & Minority Affairs
OHR	Office of the High Representative
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
ORC	Office for Returns and Communities
PLWHA	People living with HIV/AIDS
PR	Primary Recipient
RAC	Republic AIDS Commission
SCG	Serbia and Montenegro
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SDF	Serbian Democratic Forum
SEE-RAN	South East European Refugee Assistance Network
SPP WG	Sustainable Peace Programme Working Group
SRC	Serbian Refugee Council
STI	Sexual Transmitted Diseases
SW	Sex workers
UNAIDS	United Nations Joint Program on HIV/AIDS
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMIK	United Nations Mission in Kosovo
VCT	Voluntary Counselling and Testing
WHO	World Health Organization

INTRODUCTION

IAN is continuing to develop project addressing the needs of the most vulnerable population in our country.

Complexity of the **problems of our beneficiaries ranking from security issues, through socio-economic hardships till low self-esteem and self – stigmatisation demand individualised approach to the clients.** Our main value is working with clients on daily bases, living their hardship jointly and designing projects empowering clients and our organisation and the staff. Almost all of our project directors and coordinators are working part time or voluntarily with the clients in deep believe that direct work with the clients was main factor of IAN efficacy.

In this document detailed year reports are presented for each section and major project within sections.

From the beginning of our work in 1998 in trauma counselling, empathy, openness and support confidential and setting protecting privacy is crucial or important part of IAN services.

The most diverse and biggest of IAN sections **HEALTH** sections is still growing and unfortunately we still see clients suffering post traumatic disorders approaching IAN – (as only place that is addressing those issues), to speak about their experience and to look for assistance for the first time. When IAN started the first project which offered free of charge counselling for trauma victims in 1998 it was considered to be unnecessary since majority of the vulnerable people were part of some psychosocial assistance. In this year **1074 trauma and torture survivors received medical treatment, individual and group psychotherapy, outreach counselling and legal assistance.** IAN Centre for Rehabilitation of Torture Victims – CRTV, was working in close collaboration with other centres in region especially from Bosnia. One of the new activities of the CRTV centre was assessment of the cultural aspects of the trauma.

Newest project in IAN started in 2003 addressing AIDS crisis in our country. We have started to bring together HIV prevention and care and support for the people living with HIV by developing counselling and testing practice in our country. Shearing IAN values and practices with the staffs from Serbia biggest testing centre for young ISH gave excellent results. IAN staffs are still working in host VCT centre in ISH and providing counselling for the clients along side with medical professionals from ISH, developing policies and procedures and organising ongoing supervision and support. **Only in 2005 we have had 3193 people in VCT centre counselled and tested on HIV which is more than annual number in all testing sites in the country in 2003 - before IAN involvement.** We find

outreach work with commercial sex workers and injecting drug users of special importance for the people vulnerable on HIV who would otherwise stayed outside the health care system.

Human rights section is continuing to provide vital legal and administrative support for refugees and IDPs in our country despite the fact that donors interest in the subject is declining. Considerable number of refugees and IDPs are still on the margins of society struggling to reach to the sustainable solution for themselves and their families. **IAN legal officers assisted 1091 refugees with 2045 interventions** (oral and written legal assistance, return and reconstruction related issues, referral, documents, information, etc) in this one-year period. **During this period 510 new clients were provided with administrative and legal assistance as well as different personalised information from their country of origin.**

Empowerment of the clients and strengthen their capacities to live decent life's is on special focus of educational department – Telecentre. **Refugees, IDPs, Roma children, single mothers, people living with HIV and people with mental disorders benefiting from the other IAN activities or coming to our educational department through other organizations are offered contemporary and certified courses resulting with computer-literacy, English language literacy, life skills and entrepreneurial skills.** With the line of IAN main values and experience both in services provision and in evaluation, apart from the standard evaluation of the courses IAN Telecentre is taking measures of participants' psychological status at the beginning and in the end of our education programmes lasting at least 3 months. Participants are showing overall improvement and especially feel *professionally more competent and capable*. **This year 862 people had passed at least one course offered by Telecentre.**

To finish this short introduction to the report of IAN activities in 2005 we will for short go back to the IAN beginnings. **Funded by professionals experienced in research, this component stayed as IAN main features.** All IAN departments and sections in and daily work are using research to plan activities, to follow and measure effectiveness and justify activities using qualitative and quantitative methodology from the social sciences taking evaluation of the project one step further. Apart from this important IAN activity Research department was formed and implemented several fundamental research studies. In this year we have finished regional research on the living conditions, mental health, position on repatriation/integration and human rights status of refugees, returnees, displaced persons and local population in Serbia, Croatia and BiH **and published results in book**

STRUGGLE IN THE POST WAR COMMUNITY. We have participated in European study STOP - Treatment seeking and treatment outcomes in people suffering from PTSD following war and migration in the Balkans. In this year we have started with innovative study examine psychological and biological answer to the traumatic event and their connection Psychobiology of PTSD.

At the end we will present our financial report. Best practice and transparent running of administration and finances makes our work possible. Contribution of the colleagues from administrative unit is often neglected and in this way we would like to praise their important work for the overall functioning of the our organisation.

**CENTRE FOR
REHABILITATION OF
TRAUMA AND TORTURE
VICTIMS**

INTRODUCTION

Serbia and Montenegro is still a host to a large number of refugees from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as to internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Kosovo. After the registration carried out by the State in January 2005, the refugee status was confirmed for 139,483 individuals, while about 140,000 persons lost their refugee status and the rights accompanying it.

Approximately 5,000 of these refugees were subjected to torture¹.

Victims of torture are group with the highest current post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) incidence (64%). Co morbid diagnoses (such as major depression, anxiety disorders and alcohol abuse) are registered among 80% of those who have diagnosis of PTSD. Due to alcohol abuse and increased aggressive behaviour, there is high family dysfunction and trans-generational trauma. 63% of them have cardiovascular disorders, 12% endocrine glands disorders, 6% digestive disorders and 6% neurological disorders. Most of them lost their property during recent wars (70%), and have material problems (54%). Only 17% of them are employed, more than 60% survive working from time to time from the black labour market. It is an extremely vulnerable group that requires careful, comprehensive and long-term rehabilitation.

Analysis of the situation in SaM shows that there is no specialised service for the treatment and rehabilitation of trauma victims and that state institutions lack the capacity to respond to the needs of trauma survivors. Rehabilitation services for torture survivors are extremely scarce, particularly given to people who have been subjected to ill-treatment by state actors are reluctant to use state institutions and prefer the less formal setting of a specialised NGO. Awareness of torture related issues is relatively low. Medical and other related staffs working in detention facilities and in contact with victims of torture and ill treatment lack the expertise and knowledge to effectively support them. The country has adopted the UN Convention against Torture, but has not yet made moves to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT) and establish independent monitoring mechanisms of places of detention (see IAN [study](#)). The reports by Amnesty International for Serbia and Montenegro (SaM) in 2003, as well as reports by local human rights

NGOs ([report](#)), reveal that in various parts of the country police brutality is still quite common.

IAN programme for assisting trauma and torture victims has been running since November 1997. The aim of this programme is to contribute to an improvement in the mental health and physical well-being of refugees and IDPs suffering from war-related torture and trauma through provision of comprehensive assistance – psychological, psychiatric, medical, psychosocial and legal, and to ensure wider public recognition and improved professional knowledge about treatment of stress-related illnesses.

PROJECTS AND DONORS

Most of the activities implemented in 2005 within the Centre for Rehabilitation of Trauma and Torture Victims were parts of a comprehensive project funded by CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development) called

1. Recovering from the psychological trauma of war and displacement (three-year project started on 1st January 2004).

This project comprised several subprojects funded by other donors:

2. Centre for rehabilitation of torture victims –funded by United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture (UNVFVT).

3. REDRESS IN ACTION, Phase two– Rehabilitation, Compensation and Human Rights Protection of Refugees and Returnees, Victims of Forcible Mobilisation in 1995 - funded by FRESTA

4. Psycho-social rehabilitation programme for torture victims in target regions in Bosnia-Herzegovina through CTV, IAN and MEDICA mobile teams – joint cross-border project of three centres for rehabilitation of torture victims: IAN Centre for rehabilitation of torture victims, Belgrade, Association for rehabilitation of torture victims - Centre for Torture Victims, Sarajevo, and Women's association Medica Zenica. Project is funded by

¹ <http://www.ian.org.yu/tortura/eng/publications/monografija/01.pdf>

United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture (UNVFVT).

5. Providing medicaments and medical help to vulnerable groups – funded by CAFOD.

6. Developing tools and methods for working on CAT – joint project of IAN, Center for Civic Initiative, Prilep, Albanian Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims, Tirana, Kosova Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims. Project is funded by FRESTA.

7. Regional Conference on standardization of practice and enhancing cross-boundary cooperation for improvement of rehabilitation provision for torture victims in countries of former Yugoslavia - funded by United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture (UNVFVT).

CORE ACTIVITIES

Main activities include comprehensive rehabilitation of war-traumatized people, torture survivors and their family members, and other vulnerable groups through provision of:

- **Psychotherapeutic assistance** – psychological and psychiatric diagnostic and treatment - individual, group, family psychotherapy (supported with free-of-charge medicaments) in the Centre or during mobile team visit, and SOS counselling
- **Medical assistance** - diagnostic, general medical, internist and cardiologic examination and treatment supported with medicaments
- **Legal assistance** to victims of torture - legal advising and in-court representation

The assistance has been provided in the Centre and at the field through assistance of mobile team.

Assistance provided in CRTTV is:

- **Pro-active** – mobile teams, field visits - collective centres and beneficiary homes
- **Multidisciplinary** – expert teams of psychologists, psychiatrists, legal advisors and doctors
- With strong **advocacy** and **research** component

Mobile Team Visits are essential for the proactive approach to beneficiaries and making our services easily available to them. The activities of the Mobile team are: a) direct contact and on-the-spot assistance to torture victims, b) collection of information in the field on potential beneficiaries, c) dissemination of information about the work of the Rehabilitation Centre, among all possible

groups of beneficiaries, their organisations or organisations that assist them.

Clients-torture victims and members of their families are provided with following kinds on-the-spot assistance:

- counselling and psychotherapy (in the form of individual and group psychotherapy) provided by psychologist and psychiatrist
- psychological and psychiatrics diagnostics
- general medical examination and treatment
- internist's examination (EKG, blood tension control) and diagnostics
- pharmacotherapy
- psycho-pharmacotherapy.

Clients receive reports about their somatic and psychological health condition and recommendation about future treatment. Home visits are also organized for the clients who are not able to come by themselves to the examinations. For the most vulnerable cases with seriously endangered health condition we organize additional services like continuation of the therapy in adequate institution, specialist's medical examination, provision with special medicaments etc.

Total number of **1074 beneficiaries** received medical treatment, individual therapy, group therapy, outreach counselling services and legal assistance in this one-year period.

During 2005, **1074 beneficiaries** received psychological assistance – 89.2% of beneficiaries were refugees and IDPs and 10.8% of clients were from local population – mostly social cases and victims of domestic violence.

Total number of **648** clients has received psychological treatment in the form of individual and/or group psychotherapy in the Centre and **426** received psychological assistance in the field, during the visits of the mobile teams - in the collective centres and in the organisations of beneficiaries. Visits of the mobile teams have very important part in improving of the access of the beneficiaries to the needed treatment. 40 per cent of the clients were assisted in the field, during the visits of mobile team.

Total number of **412** clients was provided with medical assistance in the MEDIAN medical centre (IAN Medical Department) and during the mobile team visits. Very important part of both medical and psychological treatment was provision with the necessary medicaments.

During the period covered by these report, **124** beneficiaries, victims of torture received legal help.

Table below shows date, place, type of visit and number of clients that have been assisted during the visits of our mobile team in 2005.

DATE	MUNICIPALITY	FIELD VISIT	NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES
07.02.2005.	NOVA PAZOVA	CC PLANUM	25
12.02.2005.	UB	CC KALENIC	15
25.02.2005.	BRATUNAC	VISITS TO BENEFICIARY ASSOCIATIONS	33
11.03.2005.	KRNJESEVCI	CC ZEGRAP	40
17.03.2005.	PARACIN	NVO PRAVDA	20
18.03.2005.	VLASENICA	VISITS TO BENEFICIARY ASSOCIATIONS	18
19.03.2005.	UB	CC KALENIC	15
24.03.2005.	DELIBLATO	CC CARDAK	45
30.03.2005.	PETROVAC NA MLAVI	CC KASARNA VJ	40
01.04.2005	BRATUNAC	VISITS TO BENEFICIARY ASSOCIATIONS	16
08.04.2005.	BRATUNAC	VISITS TO BENEFICIARY ASSOCIATIONS	15
15.04.2005.	BRATUNAC	VISITS TO BENEFICIARY ASSOCIATIONS	25
22.04.2005.	VISEGRAD	VISITS TO BENEFICIARY ASSOCIATIONS	28
11.11.2005	BRATUNAC	VISITS TO BENEFICIARY ASSOCIATIONS	28
01.12.2005.	BIJELJINA	VISITS TO BENEFICIARY ASSOCIATIONS	2
14.12.2005	VISEGRAD	VISITS TO BENEFICIARY ASSOCIATIONS	34
16.12.2005.	BIJELJINA	VISITS TO BENEFICIARY ASSOCIATIONS	27
TOTAL			426

BENEFICIARIES/TARGET POPULATION

Primary beneficiaries include:

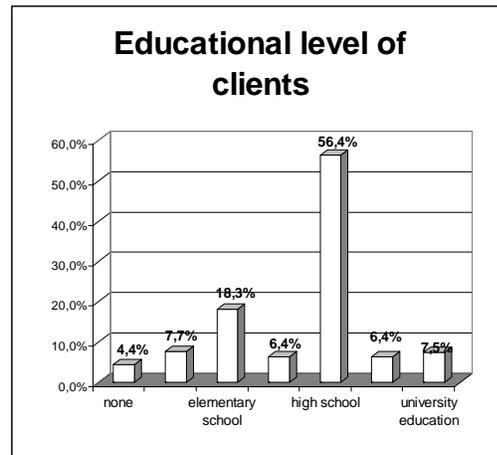
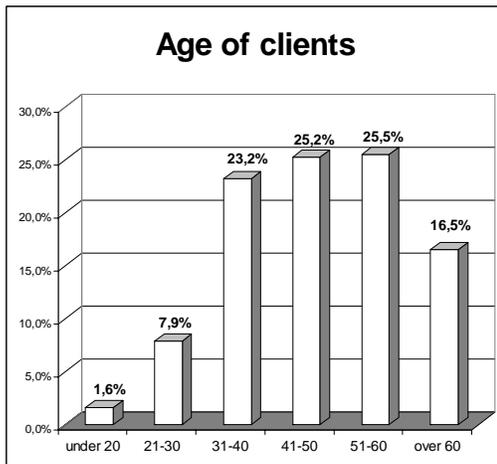
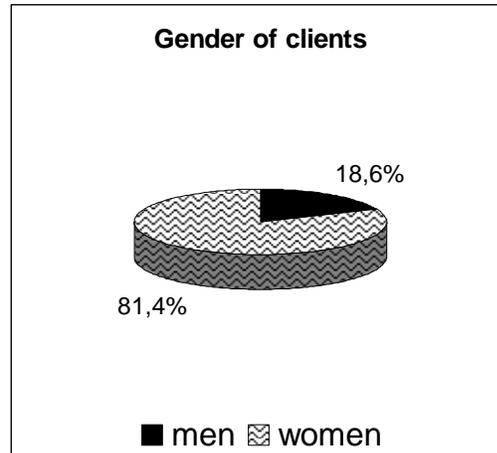
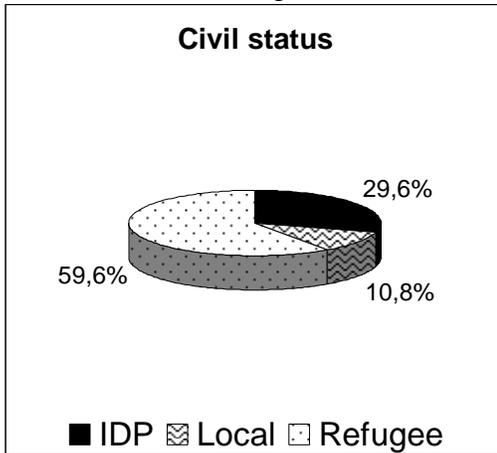
- Torture victims and their family members
- People with war-related traumas
- refugees from Croatia
- refugees from BiH
- internally displaced persons from Kosovo
- other vulnerable groups (self-supported mothers, social cases, disabled, etc.)

During the period from January to December 2005, we had in IAN centre 648 clients, and the total number of interventions was 1425. Middle aged (between 31 and 50 years old) and older clients are the most frequently clients in CRTTV. Our beneficiaries during these 12 months were mostly males (79.63%). 18.21 % of our clients were females.

56.35% of clients have high school education, 18.27% of beneficiaries have finished elementary school, and 13.85% of clients are part of “university population”.

The largest number of our beneficiaries are married and with partner (53.01%). 30.53% are single.

Basic statistics on our clients is given below:



The most frequent stresses/problems of our beneficiaries are: imprisonment, material-existential problems, attendance in war and war suffering -related traumas. 70 per cent of our clients asked for assistance for the first time in CRTTV. Over 70 per cent of clients suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, 37 per cent of clients from depressive and 24 per cent from anxiety disorder.

EDUCATIVE ACTIVITIES

In order to increase detection rate, appropriate referral and treatment of PTSD amongst IDPs and refugees by health care professionals, the following educational activities were organised:

1. *Training in applying bio-psychological battery of instruments for detection of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.* - from 5th until 11th of February 2005.
2. *Lectures on Mechanism of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder*

Lectures with the aim of better understanding of the mechanisms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder were held. Professionals from

different area of mental and physical health care – students of Medical School, medical practitioners and psychologists attended this lectures (average number of participant was between 20 and 30). Lectures were following: *Basic personality structure and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder* held by Prof. Goran Knezevic, PhD, IAN member, 30.06.2005.

Changes within gluco - corticoid receptor in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder held by Prof. Gordana Matic, PhD, Institute for Biological Research “Sinisa Stankovic”, Belgrade, IAN associate, 23.06.2005.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder – epidemiology, classification and psychobiology held by Dr. Zeljko Spiric and Dr. Radomir Samardzic, Military Medical Academy, Belgrade, IAN members, 16.06.2005.

Endocrinological bases of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder held by Prof. Svetozar Damjanović, Institute of Endocrinology, Diabetes & Metabolic Disease, Belgrade, IAN associate, 07.07.2005.

3. Seminar “PTSD- detection, symptoms and treatment”

On 25th of January this year, comprehensive seminar about detection, symptoms and treatment of Posttraumatic stress disorder was organised. Attendees of the seminar were general practitioners, psychiatrists and psychologists working in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Number of participants was forty-seven. Themes of seminar were following: *Instruments for diagnose of PTSD, Epidemiology and classification of PTSD, Biological bases of PTSD and Tertiary gain for PTSD patients*. Conductors of the seminar were: Vladimir Jović, MA, psychiatrist, Prof Goran Knezevic, PhD, psychologist, Dr. Zeljko Spiric, psychiatrist and Dr. Radomir Samardzic, psychiatrist.

4. Regional Conference on standardization of practice and enhancing cross-boundary cooperation for improvement of rehabilitation provision for torture victims in countries of former Yugoslavia, Igalo, May 2005

The Conference was financed by United Nations Voluntary Fund for Torture Victims.

Key aim of the conference was to provide a solid framework for upgrading the quality of service provision in centres for torture victims in countries of former Yugoslavia through enhancement of knowledge by mutual exchange of experience of professionals in various fields engaged in service provision and assistance for torture victims. On the Conference specialists from the various fields exchanged experiences, knowledge, standard procedures implemented in each centre involved, and quality of service provision, potential problems and exchanges of ideas for possibilities concerning mutual activities in the future, through structured conversation, case presentations and presentations of statistic data on beneficiaries and evaluation of treatment.

5. 7-day School about forced migrations, from 5th till 11th of December 2005, Banja Vrujci

7-day School about forced migrations was project carried on by Group 484, financed by CAFOD. Group 484 and IAN prepared education programme aiming at increasing informativeness and understanding of migrations, interdisciplinary approach to this phenomenon and education of young people to be dealing with it in the future in a professional and socially adequate way. Attendees of the

school were students of Psychology, Faculty of Political Sciences and Faculty of Law, representatives of NGOs who works with refugees and IDPs and representatives of governmental institutions engaged on refugee issues. Thirty six participants attended the School.

IAN representatives were engaged as experts-leaders on following topics: Basics of counselling, Trauma and PTSD, and Methodology of psychological researches.

OTHER RELEVANT ACTIVITIES



26. June 2005. - UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

On the occasion of the UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, 26 June, the International Aid Network (IAN) and Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) organized the Press conference on 27 June in Media Centre in Belgrade. The main topics of the conference were legal and psychological consequences of forcibly mobilized refugees in Serbia. Conclusions and recommendations acquired within the project **REDRESS IN ACTION** were summarized.

Speakers at the Conference were Prof. Vojin Dimitrijević, director of the BCHR, Vladimir Jović, PhD, psychiatrist and programme director in International Aid Network, Mojca Šivert, attorney at law and project legal advisor in International Aid Network and Bojan Đurić, lawyer and researcher in BCHR.

At the beginning, the part of the documentary on forcibly mobilized refugees made by IAN was presented and initiated huge interest of the audience. Than the speakers presented their part and role in the project **REDRESS IN ACTION** – *Comprehensive rehabilitation, legal representation of and advocacy for torture victims – forcibly mobilised refugees from Croatia and*

Bosnia-Herzegovina currently residing in Serbia and Montenegro.

The press conference was attended by journalists and the representatives of interested non-governmental organizations. The press reports appeared in the most popular dailies *Politika*, *Danas* and *Glas javnosti*

NEEDS ASSESSMENT, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

In IAN CRTTV evaluation of effects of psychological treatment is conducted in several ways.

First type of evaluation is psychotherapeutic assessment of therapy progress and mental condition of clients.

Second type of evaluation represents client's introspective report of therapy progress.

Third type of assessment is objective way of evaluation referring to statistical data analysis of psychological questionnaires.

Evaluation of effects of psychological treatment provided in IAN CRTTV consisted of applying questionnaires in two time points – at the beginning (when clients first come to centre) and after three months of psychotherapy. Those questionnaires are: Impact of events scale IES-R and Symptom checklist (SCL 90R).

Statistically significant reduction of PTSD symptoms in treated beneficiaries was verified through psychological assessment before and three months after treatment, reports from the beneficiaries and case studies illustrating stories of change.

Results of the **evaluation of psychological treatment** show improvement in psychological status of clients who received psychotherapy (supported by medicaments in great number of cases). By using statistical analysis we can see significant decrease in level of psychopathological symptoms when clients first came to Centre and after three months of psychotherapy. Based on these results we can conclude that psychotherapy is effective and leads toward reduction of these symptoms.

IAN in fighting HIV and AIDS

“Change comes from small initiatives which work, initiatives which, imitated, become the fashion. We cannot wait for great visions from great people, for they are in short supply. It is up to us to light our own small fires in the darkness”

Charles Handy

INTRODUCTION

AIDS is an extraordinary type of crisis. To stand any chance of effectively respond to the epidemic we have to treat it as both as an emergency and long term development issue. This means resisting the temptation to accept the inevitability of AIDS as just another of the world's many problems. The AIDS epidemic is exceptional; it requires response that remains flexible, creative, energetic and vigilant. Two decades after the first case was reported, the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) has become one of the most alarming and devastating pandemics the world has ever seen.

Serbia and Montenegro

At the end of 2005, our country reported 2003 people living with HIV. 1290 of them have AIDS. The fact that more than 60% people who are living with HIV already has AIDS indicates that people living with HIV/AIDS wait until they develop clear symptoms before coming forth for testing. Serbia and Montenegro still has the lowest number of HIV tested people per capita in Europe. We do not have monitoring and surveillance system.

There is no link between prevention and care and support programs. Serbia did not win Global Fund award for the period 2006-2011. We expect that unfortunate funding situation will have negative impact on sustaining achieved results in the prevention of HIV, care and support for affected individuals and surveillance, and projects that are already running and especially for the planned activities for prevention among vulnerable groups.

The whole situation in our country we can describe in one sentence: "We know about HIV and AIDS but we do not want to know and to see".

Voluntary Counselling and Testing

VCT is increasingly being recognized as a crucial component of effective strategies for HIV and AIDS prevention and care.

Implemented properly, VCT has the potential of providing multiple benefits. For individuals, VCT provides an opportunity to enhance one's ability to reduce risk and increase one's access to HIV prevention, care and treatment and support service. For communities, VCT is a means to create awareness, mobilize local response and reduce stigma and discrimination. Importantly, new developments in the dynamics and response to the epidemic have made VCT an essential component, providing a link between prevention and care.

Since 2004, there was no any VCT centre in Serbia and Montenegro.

Global statistics on HIV/AIDS

Number of people living with HIV/AIDS

Total: 40.3 million

Adults: 38 million

Children under 15: 2.3 million

People newly infected with HIV in 2005

Total: 4.9 million

Adults: 4.2 million

Children under 15: 0.7 million

AIDS deaths in 2005

Total: 3.1 million

Adults: 2.6 million

Children under 15: 570 000

Source: UNAIDS

BEGINING

HIV/AIDS section was established in May 2003 with 6 months HIV/AIDS situation analysis and needs assessment. The result of that analysis was Overview document which explained situation regarding HIV and AIDS in our country, current prevention and other projects and recommendations to potential IAN's involvement in fighting HIV. According to IAN's experiences in establishing counselling service and fact that VCT is not developed in our country, we decided to try to establish VCT centre in cooperation with government institutions that provides HIV testing in terms to build their capacities to develop VCT as a prevention tool in fighting HIV. The first project begun in March 2004 and it was a pilot project "Voluntary Counselling to the HIV Testing in Serbia" implemented in cooperation with Institute for Student's Health – Belgrade. ***The result of the project was establishing the first VCT centre in our country.*** After the successful pilot project, we continued our activities in 2005 – 2007.

The first VCT in our country

The centre is settled in centre for AIDS and STI prevention in ISH. It consists of three services:

VCT service is open for counselling before and after testing every weekday from 8am to 5pm. All services are free of charge for general population. The laboratory is located within ISH hospital nearby VCT centre. The hospital and laboratory were reconstructed in 1999, and they are equipped with contemporary laboratory equipment, with highly trained staff sensitive to the HIV issues.

STI service is open three days per week (Monday, Wednesday and Friday) from 8am to 1pm providing free of charge STI counselling and information giving to general population.

AIDS info line is open every weekday from 5pm to 7pm for those who want to get information and support concerning HIV and services.

VISION

IAN believes that compassion and understanding are precondition to fight the biggest killer of our time – HIV. Holistic approach connecting tightly prevention and care and support, simultaneously tickling stigma and discrimination is the most ethical and effective way in fighting HIV and AIDS.

Donors

Our major donor CAFOD is providing basic technical support (the ongoing training and supervision) as well as financial support since May 2003.

CIDA provided financial support to the pilot project from March 2004 to March 2005.

Geneva Global supported the program since September 2005.

Staff members

We started with 3 staff members, all educated in voluntary pre and post test counselling. At the moment we have 6 staff members involved in different activities on the project. All of them are psychologists working pre and post HIV test counselling, even two coordinators who share that position. Other 7 counsellors working in VCT centre and contributing to the project impacts are medical doctors and nurses from ISH.

Voluntary counselling and testing is the process in which an individual undergoes counselling enabling him or her to make informed choice about being tested for HIV. This decision must be entirely the choice of the individual and her or she must be assured that the process will be **confidential**.

PROJECT

“**Good practice in Voluntary Counselling and Testing of HIV in Serbia**” started in March 2005 and it is continuation of pilot project “Voluntary Counselling to the HIV Testing in Serbia”. The project is joint project of IAN and ISH technically and financially supported by CAFOD. The project is two years project which is contributed with two small projects supported by CIDA and Geneva Global. All of these donors have different role: CIDA supports outreach VCT and testing and Geneva Global supports printing monograph that will collect all our experiences and describe challenges in establishing the first VCT in Serbia.

Aim

All people who undergo an HIV test in the state regulated institutions of Serbia receive pre and post HIV test counselling according to the standards recommended WHO and UNAIDS.

Objective

Build the local capacity of IAN and ISH so that they can provide sustainable and integrated VCT service in Belgrade and its surroundings.

Beneficiaries

The VCT centre offers counselling and testing for general population but our main beneficiaries are young people and people especially vulnerable on HIV infection: IDU, MSM and SW. Our beneficiaries are on the margin of society in transition, and most affected with the struggles post war community: poverty, widespread unemployment, increased migration, family hardships and breakdown, inability to access health care services, poor educational systems and the position on the trafficking routes for drugs and humans through the region to Western Europe.

The second beneficiaries are PLWHA who will get on going post test counselling and basic support for advocacy initiatives.

The staff of VCT centre is receiving basic and advance training in counselling skills and continuing support and supervision that leads to increase of their competencies in counselling.

Decision makers, NGOs, GOs and medical institutions and individuals in our country are learning through our project about possibilities of NGO and GO cooperation in providing service and about good practice in VCT.

Activities

Pre and post HIV test counselling

The most important activity of the project is offering free of charge, voluntary and anonymous pre and post test counselling and HIV testing.

VCT is recommended by UNAIDS and WHO as a good practice for HIV prevention and early access to treatment and care for PLWHA. Counselling is not recognized in our country as an integral and necessary part of HIV testing procedures and as efficient prevention tool in fighting HIV. Offering VCT service to general population we try to create an example of good practice for decision makers to recognize the impact of counselling in prevention HIV.

For those clients who do not feel comfortable or are unable to come to the centre in regular working hours, we have organised counselling and HIV testing during night (**Night counselling**) from 8pm to 12pm. For certain groups at risk, night counselling seems to be a more feasible option. For example, the number of IDU approaching the centre during the night testing (pilot project experiences) is three times larger than outside night testing. The beneficiaries report that during night testing and counselling they are less concerned about being stigmatized by medical staff of their departments and preserving confidentiality. Data indicate that clients who come during the night are more concerned about confidentiality and the majority wants to do test anonymously.



Counselling session in VCT

Outreach Program

In terms to be more proactive and to reach more people at HIV risks, we try to organize outreach

VCT in the places where the most vulnerable groups (IDU and SW) are gathered.



VCT for SW organized in JAZAS vehicle, December 2005

It will be done for SW in specially designed vehicle allows the counselling to be performed, in cooperation with JAZAS (NGO working with SW). We organized VCT in JAZAS vehicle twice during the December 2005. **25 SW** wanted counselling and tests on HIV. At the moment, we are in negotiations to organize VCT in drop in centre of NGO MDM working with IDU. These activities will start next year.

Training of project staff

Two training events were organized: basic and advanced training on VCT. Both training events were held by Jim Simmons in July 2005.

Three members of IAN new staff, 4 staff member from ISH already involved in counselling in VCT centre and representatives from 5 referral organisations took part in basic training. Basic training was organized for several reasons:

1. Education of IAN's new staff
2. Ensuring quality and improving VCT skills of ISH counsellors who were working in VCT centre but without VCT training
3. Establishing contacts with representatives from referral organisations and improving referral procedures for clients of VCT centre (representatives from Centre for Infection and Tropical Diseases from Belgrade, Centre for vertical transmission of HIV, NGO CAZAS, NGO Youth of JAZAS and HIV Prevention among Vulnerable Populations Initiative)



Basic VCT training for referral organisations, July 2005

Advanced VCT training was organized for all staff members of VCT Centre with purpose of forming a mutual theoretical base and promoting in-depth psychological understanding of VCT guidelines, considering the fact that VCT counsellors come from different professional backgrounds: medical and psychological. The content of the training was Client Centred Counselling theory of Carl Rogers.

Supervisions and support

In terms of continuing education of the staff, we have organized regular group supervisions with case studies and role-plays held by Slavko Mackic, psychoanalyst and psychodrama psychotherapist, who has experiences in facilitation of group supervision. This kind of sharing experiences about counselling skills is important not only for acquiring pre and post test counselling skills but also for the prevention of the burnout syndrome. Group supervisions also facilitate team building of VCT centre staff and help in ensuring quality of counselling service.

Two external supervisions (10 days) were held by Mr. Jim Simmons in January, June and July 2005. It consisted of group supervisions with all counsellors working in centre and individual supervisions with each counsellor and member of project staff. During these five days we were trying to identify obstacles in daily work concerning our counselling skills as well as technical and others problems in creating a good service for potential clients and in team building.



External supervision, June 2005

Story of change

Milena Blagojevic, ISH counsellor after Jim's training and supervision

"At the very beginning, I have to admit, I felt considerable fear from Jim, somewhat because of the reputation he earned among other counsellors (so many words of praise that oblige!), somewhat because of concern about how I would be "evaluated" as a counsellor... Then, the first supervision came and I was fascinated. There was a man who did not look for mistakes, who did not judge, who did not even try to subdue my rather vivid temperament, a man who simply LISTENED and pointed to certain things, and I myself discovered my mistakes when there were some... At the next internal supervision already I started with: "Hoping to see Jim soon..." I looked forward to the training. Rescheduling my holiday and all other duties was worth it. And the training was invaluable to me. Now I am learning to listen. I am learning to recognize my clients' feelings. To observe body language. To speak slowly. To speak clearly. To say much in few words. To avoid assuming. To encourage the clients. To help them make decisions by themselves. And again to listen to them, to listen, to feel.... and yet not to experience burnout.

I think about what kind of counsellor I was before this training. Maybe I forgot it on purpose so as to be less ashamed. Hoping that this cooperation (and building up the knowledge) with Jim will continue, I express my deep gratitude"

Promotion activities

Workshop for IAN staff

IAN has organized a workshop for other members of IAN staff that already works in the field and has long experiences in work with vulnerable group. The workshop was organized in Igalo, in May 2005. More than 20 IAN employees attended two days of workshops. The main aims of workshop were:

- to present our project aim and objectives and results of pilot project experiences
- to present our activities and plans
- to explain VCT process and benefits of VCT for individual and community
- to present challenges in work with GO

The role play performed during this workshop with the purpose to show HIV testing situation was very interesting for IAN staff. Majority of them told that they did not know before how much emotions are around testing situation. They reported that they felt fear, shame, sadness, angry, anger in the same time.

The purpose of this workshop was to sensitize IAN staff on HIV issues because HIV is quite new issue for IAN and IAN staff do not have experiences working with people who are infected or affected by HIV.

Referral workshop

With the purpose of improving referral a seminar was organized from September 29th till 2nd October in Bar. The participants on the seminar were representatives of institutions to whom we usually refer our clients: Centre for Infection and Tropical Diseases, Centre for Vertical Transmission, NGOs working with vulnerable populations (MDM, JAZAS and HPVPI), NGO Youth of JAZAS, and NGO CAZAS from Montenegro, Institute for Public Health from Belgrade and Institute for Public Health from Podgorica and representative of association of PLWHA.



Referral seminar, September 2005, Bar

The purpose of the seminar was promoting cooperation between HIV/AIDS related organizations and institutions through learning and better understanding of goals, functioning and practices within each organization/institution. We aimed to understand better the procedures in referral organisations in order to be able to respond better to needs of our clients by making agreement with institutions and organisations about better referral functioning.

3.4.6 Monograph – we are preparing monograph that will describe our experiences in promoting VCT which will be distributed among other NGOs, medical institutions and faculties in the Belgrade and its surroundings. This monograph could help counsellors in other testing centres to improve their counselling skills as well as decision makers to understand all benefits of VCT. Finally, it could serve as a guide for those who want to establish new VCT centres in Serbia and Montenegro.

Cooperation and networking

The project is being implemented jointly by IAN and ISH. Both organisations have made a big step towards team building and the counsellors now work as a compact team equal contributing to the deciding on the organisation of work, policies development and advertising. Good results of collaborative practices are transparent and can be demonstrated, other stakeholders are challenging their replicability and values. Collaborative approach in developing VCT service between IAN and ISH proved to be a success but it faces number of challenges. The biggest challenge is present in the area of perception of NGOs function and the role they have in society. NGOs in Serbia are perceived to be implementing small and non-systematic projects and as a way to reach the

clients in the field. Views and recommendations of NGOs in decision and policy making are often neglected. Ways of introducing WHO and UNAIDS standards into the existing practice are not recognized as a process that can be copied but rather as one off project.²

IAN is invited to participate in the network organised by HPVPI secretariat as part of the project of HIV prevention among vulnerable groups.

We have established contact and we regularly exchange experiences with many HIV/AIDS related organizations such as JAZAS, MDM, Youth of JAZAS, Red Line (Novi Sad), Philanthropy, Institute for Infective Diseases.

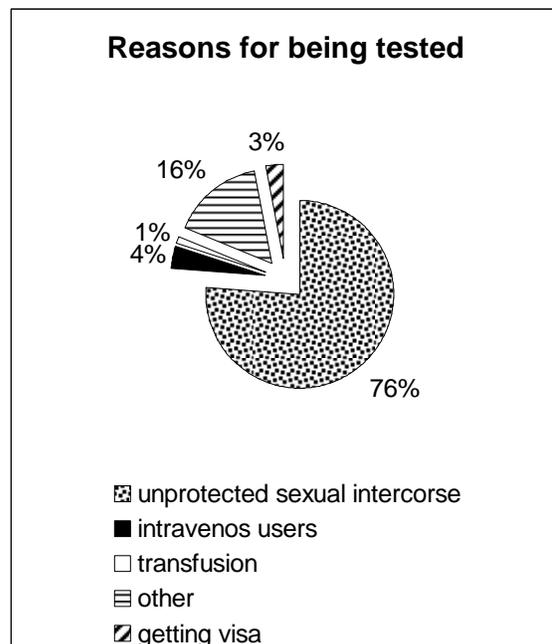
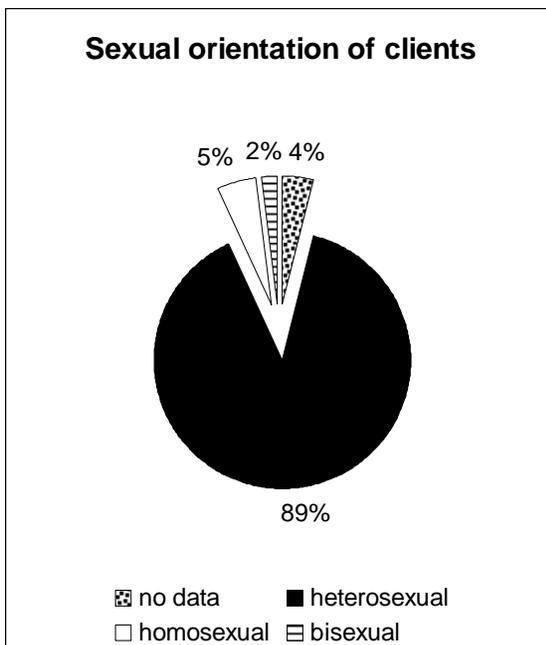
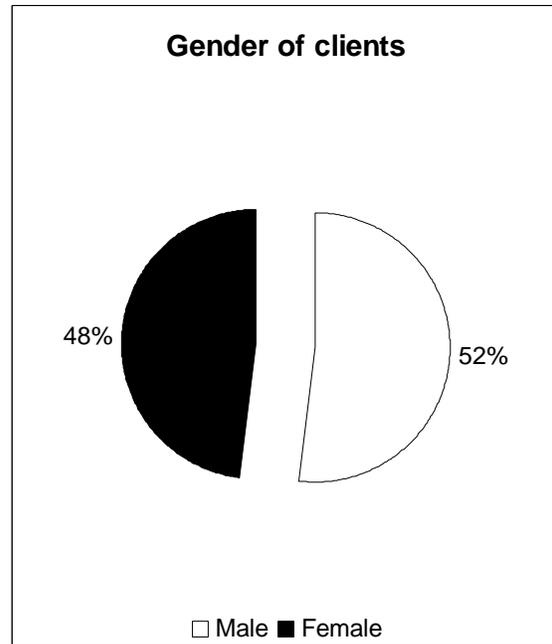
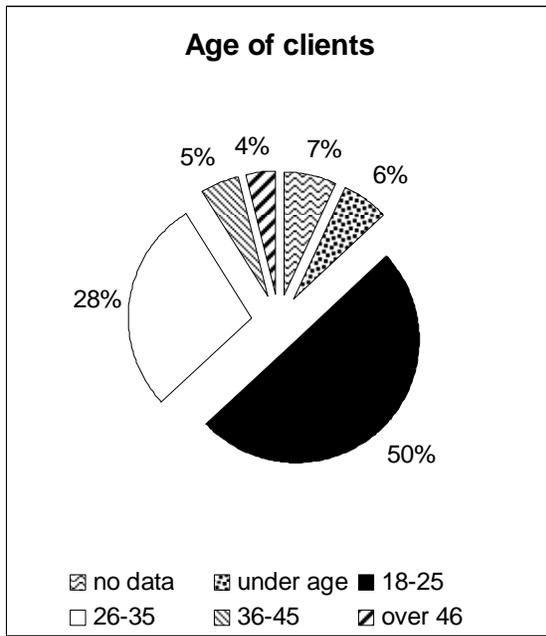
We established cooperation with organisations from Montenegro such as CAZAS and Institute for Public Health from Podgorica.

Clients of the VCT centre

VCT counsellors in centre have been engaged in daily work with the clients as well as during the night testing events, counselling them, ordering for testing and referring them to the other relevant organisations and institutions. During the previous project, we made different statistic for the clients in night testing events and those who approach to the centre in regular working hours. This time, we have organized night testing following the same procedures and ensuring the same quality as in our daily work in the centre. Therefore, procedures and documentation following these VCTs were the same as in centre's daily work.

THE TOTAL NUMBER OF CLIENTS	
counselling without HIV testing	552
counselling and HIV testing	2641
HIV negative	2620
HIV positive	21
TOTAL	3193

² Quoting experience of ISH with great increase of the clients –Public Health Centers in Serbia major towns (Nis, Novi Sad, Kragujevac, Subotica,) were invited to also increase number of tested people and were provided with free HIV test kits but no other investment or support was provided



The majority of our clients are young people. More than 70% are between 18 and 35 years old. Both male and female want to know their HIV status. Majority of our clients are heterosexual orientation. Only 5% of them are homosexual orientation. This is the reason to be more proactive and to organize outreach VCT, especially for IDU, SW and MSM. According to fact that majority of clients are heterosexual, 76% of them wanted to be tested because of unprotected sexual behaviour. This is real challenge for counsellors to work on prevention and to try to

make a relationship with clients that could help to changing risk behaviour.

Of total number of clients:

- 67.9% are from Belgrade; 2.1% are from Montenegro
- 61.1% are students
- 60.2% are unemployed
- 69.3% were tested for HIV for the first time
- less than 1% did not come for post test counselling

Compared to previous project, much more clients with high risk behaviour approach to the centre. Approximately one third of all clients had high risk behaviour (unprotected sexual intercourse with numerous partners, sex workers, IDUs, use of drugs and alcohol during sexual intercourses) and this year, more MSM clients approach to the centre (5% compared to 4% in previous project period).

Also, more clients decide not to be anonymous: 27% clients decide to be anonymous. In previous project period, 35% of clients decided to be anonymous. It is obvious that our clients have more trust in centre and start to understand the real benefits of VCT.

Compared to the previous project experience, the number of clients referred to the centre by other clients is significantly greater (32.2% compared to 29%). Fact that 32.2% of clients came on recommendation of other clients and very high returning rate are understand that centre is recognized as more user friendly.

The number of clients tested in VCT centre is TWICE larger than 2003 - before counselling as a service offered, only 1500 people approached to testing centre in ISH

Other related activities

In addition to the basic activities in providing good practice counselling and free of charge HIV testing to general population, ISH managed to purchase tests for Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C. We were providing counselling before and after Hepatitis B and C testing and referral to relevant institutions and organisations.

The survey of HIV prevalence and risk behaviour among injecting drug users and sex workers in Serbia and Montenegro

The survey of HIV prevalence, risk behaviour and risk factors associated with HIV positively among

injecting drug users and sex workers aimed to estimate the prevalence of HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C in sampling of IDUs and SWs recruited outside of treatment services in Serbia and Montenegro by RDS method (responded dried sample) and to measure injecting and sexual risk behaviour related to HIV and hepatitis C transmission. Data from the surveys will also be used to estimate the size of the injecting population in the cities where the surveys are undertaken, and will be applied to mathematical models of both HIV transmission dynamics and the impact of HIV prevention interventions.

The surveys of IDUs are funded by the UK Department for International Development, through Imperial College London. The surveys of SWs are funded by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), USA, with joint responsibility with Imperial College London. IAN was invited to be implementing partner of survey. The survey will take place from September 22nd until December 1st.

Because of low availability of HIV testing to intravenous drug users and sex workers all participants in survey would be offered free, confidential, anonymous HIV testing with rapid tests in IAN premises.

This was the first use of rapid HIV tests in our country. Also, that was the first VCT offered out of medical setting - in NGO setting.

The testing process includes pre test counselling, testing and post test counselling and two counsellors from IAN and two from ISH will be engaged in survey.

We prepared a protocol for VCT service in IAN using previous experiences in VCT centre and made agreement with Infection Clinic about referring clients who will get HIV positive result to them.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CLIENTS IN RESEARCH		
	participation in study	VCT service
IDU	431	200
SW	211	147
total	642	347

More than 50% of those who took participation in study wanted to be counselled and tested (351 participants). 70% of SW was tested; almost 50% of IDU were tested.

Each participant got an incentive (10EUR) for participation in the study. The counselling and testing was voluntary but majority of participants want to be counselled and tested, especially SWs were very motivated to know their HIV status. Free HIV testing and referrals to the clinic have an additional benefit which SWs and IDUs could not get in regular health institutions. Even they can, they do not feel comfortable to do that because of discrimination.

This kind of VCT we can call “outreach VCT”.

	counselled and tested	positive	give up during pre counselling
IDU	200	7	5
SW	147	3	2
Both	4	0	0
total	351	10	7

The experiences from this study were very useful not only because data we get, but because we did counselling ONLY to groups who are at high risk for HIV. There were a lot of challenges for counsellors and their counselling skills.

Milena Prvulovic and Jovana Stojanovski, VCT counsellors in study said:

“Counselling IDUs and SW is challenging and in some points different from counselling clients at the VCT centre. Unlike the clients from centre, the counsellor has difficulties in establishing rapport with the clients who are participants of the survey for several reasons. IDU’s and SW’s life stories and experiences are different from most people’s everyday experience, so one has to be very open and none prejudiced to understand them and not be judgment. Accepting these clients is a challenge for the counsellor’s empathy...

... Most of IDU denied that they are at risk of HIV and it was difficult to make them see that their behaviour is risky and to motivate them to change it. Also, because the client “know” that he/she was at risk, client had no or did not want to share any emotional content regarding the testing situation...

... A lot of sex workers had no knowledge about HIV and they appeared mentally undeveloped. Establishing rapport with these clients was not so difficult, but counselling was mostly about

explaining the client where he/she is, what the purpose of the conversation is and then continuing to explain what AIDS is, what is risky behaviour and about prevention from it. Clients expressed no emotions connected to the testing situation, probably because of the difficulties they had in articulating their emotions and because of their lack of knowledge about HIV and AIDS...

... The challenge with both clients from the survey and from the Centre is reducing the risk behaviour and stimulating the client to actually their knowledge about safe sex

Support for establishing VCT centre in Podgorica

NGO CAZAS and Institute for Public Health from Podgorica (Montenegro) established the first VCT centre in Montenegro. They used the similar model we have used in Belgrade - NGO and GO try to joint efforts in developing VCT. We were invited by them to organize education for their counsellors and to support them by giving advances and technical support. They adopted our working protocol of VCT centre and our data base. We organized three training events in March and May. After those training events, they finally established centre in the beginning of June and continue to cooperate with us in order to organize the same centre in Montenegro. They invited us to organize supervision for counsellors in the future.



Role play, Training for VCT counsellors in Podgorica, May 2005

This is not only benefiting for VCT centre in Podgorica, but for each of our centre to share experiences and to fund the best VCT model for our country. Also, the greatest benefit would have all people in our country because they have opportunities to get good quality counselling and testing in different places.

The first Balkans HIV conference

The conference was organized by Partnership in Health and SIDA and it was held in Skopje in November 2005. The IAN representative took participation in conference.

The goal of conference was to serve as a platform to build and sustain a better regional HIV/AIDS prevention, care and support network. It provided the first regional opportunity for the exchange of HIV/AIDS experiences between local and international NGOs and governments.

The conference objectives were to promote dialogue among the project partners and those affected by the disease, to enhance cooperation, to build regional capacities among NGOs and governmental agencies dealing with HIV/AIDS, and to enhance coordination in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the Western Balkans.

Up to 100 participants took a part in the conference, including Ministry of Health officials, NGO representatives, people living with HIV and AIDS, epidemiologists, infectious disease specialists, UN agency representatives, donors and other participants who are involved in HIV/AIDS prevention, care and support.

Key note speaker was Dr. Susan Paxton. She is openly HIV positive activist, facilitator and community based researcher. She has been living with HIV for over sixteen years and is passionately committed to training other HIV positive people throughout the Asia Pacific region and in particular to enhancing the skills base of HIV positive women so that they have the confidence to have a voice and play an equal part in national and international decision making.

Conclusions on situation and response in Western Balkans from conference are:

- **The risk is LOW but diagnosis of HIV is LATE (majority of PLWHA discovered they HIV status when they developed clear symptoms of AIDS)**
- **Vast majority of cases 20 – 35 years old**
- **LOW national information rate**
- **The data available on HIV and AIDS cases is based on test results**
- **No developed surveillance system and system for monitoring and evaluation**
- **No research among especially vulnerable populations such as IDU, MSM, SW, Roma, migrant population**
- **A great risk present such as: poverty, migration of population, unemployment,**

trafficking country, increasing sex industry and substance abuse, increasing of sexual transmitted diseases, increasing availability of illicit drugs

- **No strong government response to HIV and AIDS**
- **Developed National strategy not without strong and clear action plan based on international donors founding and support**
- **VCT is recognized as surveillance but not prevention tool in fighting HIV and AIDS**
- **Cooperation among all stakeholders is still weak, especially cooperation between GOs and NGOs (excluding Albania and Kosovo)**
- **Anti retroviral therapy is offered but no strong link between relevant stakeholders in the field of HIV prevention and treatment, both nationally and regionally**
- **No PLWHA are involved in HIV prevention**
- **There is no strong association of PLWHA in region**

Evaluation and impacts**Direct impacts**

- 9 500 of people will receive quality counselling to change behaviour to lessen risk of HIV transmission and acquiring. A data base system for clients was developed during the pilot project and a new one will be developed for the outreach program. An adequate care will be taken to ensure the strict confidentiality of the clients
- 13 counsellors are developing counselling skills through training, external supervision and internal supervision and lectures
- 1000 care providers and policy makers gain knowledge about importance of counselling testing and referral services to fight HIV/AIDS in our community

Indirect impacts

- Family and friends of clients will be also impacted positively by the expected behaviours change of direct beneficiaries. Experience from the pilot project shows that 26% of our clients come as the result of mouth-to-mouth advertising. Estimation of number of indirect beneficiaries will be calculated for the

presence of mouth-to-mouth advertisement

- Other staff of the ISH (dermatovenerologists, gynaecologists, and laboratory staff) will learn about youth friendly and client centered approach since sharing same premises. ISH is recognized by UNFPA as one of the best practice institutions providing youth health services in the region. ISH General Manager and UNFPA representatives find that one of the major factors contributing to UNFPA recommendation of ISH as best practice centre was success and products of the pilot project.

PERSPECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

The National Strategy in fighting AIDS will establish a strategic direction for the majority of organisations but action plan is not developed yet. Since our country did not win GF, there is suspicion that action plan would be prepared in next few years.

We continued our efforts to develop VCT in whole country and for standardisation of VCT practice. There is no still really good understanding of VCT and its benefits for the people and community. Considerable number of clients came to the centre “to be tested” on recommendation of other medical professionals as a condition for medical service (methadone program, surgery...). There is no right understanding of values of counselling process – a lot of medical staff in different organisation is focused on HIV testing, not on counselling and changing risk behaviour.

As advocacy gives good results during the pilot project, we believe that we need to take more action to advocate for the good service of VCT³ as recommended by UNAIDS and WHO. One of the most important issues for us is still to advocate for on going education and supervision of VCT counsellors as well as for counselling as a tool with benefit for itself.

As a part of strategic plan for advocating for standardised VCT service, IAN together with ISH, Institutes for Public Health from Novi Sad and Podgorica (three VCT centre in our country) is initiating activities for standardisation of VCT practice in order to develop a guide for all who want to establish VCT centre and to ensure that all clients in our country get the same quality counselling and HIV testing.

Our data base needs further work in order to adjust new requests of the national surveillance system.

Since outreach counselling and testing is being developed we are planning to develop protocol to serve for the specific needs of vulnerable populations and to be much more proactive in our efforts to meet the needs of potential clients.

³ It is illustrative that in strategy VCT is viewed as secondary to the testing and not recognised as a prevention tool. (VCT is a part of the SURVEILLANCE strategy, term “confidential testing is used indicating misunderstanding of basic concepts of VCT, there is no evidence that UNAIDS and WHO documents were consulted in formatting national VCT strategy)

In spite of efforts made in previous period to improve referral for the clients of our centre, a lot of work still needs to be done. Our future activities aim at building stronger referral connections that would be based on formal partnership statements or contracts.

There is no psychological support counselling service for people infected and affected by HIV. After the study on HIV prevalence among IDU and SW, Imperial College offered to IAN possibility to fund money for that kind of service. We are now in phase of negotiations. Psychological counselling and support for PLWHA could be a big step for IAN and our country to offer the first support counselling to PLWHA. That could be a big step to establish stronger associations of PLWHA.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEPARTMENT

INTRODUCTION

The process of both return and integration of displaced people in the region of former Yugoslavia is extremely complex and it depends on various political, social and economical factors. As IAN believes that the central overall objective for all refugee related interventions in the region must be to find sustainable solutions for the refugees and displaced persons, the key to this remains the creation of conditions that allow the exiled and displaced to exercise their right to return freely to their homes or to integrate in the country of exile and to have access to all human rights before they make decision about the most secure and sustainable livelihoods for them.

Serbia and Montenegro is still a host to a large number of refugees from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as to internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Kosovo. After the registration carried out by the State in January 2005, the refugee status was confirmed for 139,483 individuals, while about 140,000 persons lost their refugee status and the rights accompanying it. All these people together with about 220,000 IDPs have not found durable solution to their problems, and issues related to both their return and integration continue to be a source of problems for SCG.

IAN Repatriation programme has been running since early 2001. It is oriented towards empowerment of refugees from Croatia and BiH, displaced persons from Kosovo and other vulnerable persons and community groups in Serbia by providing information, legal aid, referrals, psychological counselling and specific skills trainings. Thus, the beneficiaries are enabled to have better option for finding a durable solution - possibilities for return and exercising all rights in the country of origin, or permanent settlement in the country of exile, i.e. Serbia.

STAFF MEMBERS

Total number of 10 staff members was engaged in realisation of the activities within projects implemented by the Repatriation Unit in 2005 including: project manager, project coordinator, financial manager legal advisers, info officer, web master, psychologist, field worker, administrative assistant and driver.

PROJECTS AND DONORS

Most of the activities implemented in 2005 within the Repatriation Unit were parts of a comprehensive project funded by CAFOD called

1. **Empowerment for Peace - Facilitation of durable solutions for Refugees and IDPs settled in Serbia** (two-year project started on 1st October 2003 and finished on 30th September 2005).

This project comprised several subprojects funded by other donors:

2. **Triangle Repatriation** –funded by FRESTA
3. **KOSOVO information project** – funded by DRC through the EAR project
4. **Refugee Day 2005** – funded by SRC and UNHCR
5. **Connecting people** - funded by FRESTA

In December 2005 a new project has started:

6. **Empowerment against poverty** – funded by CAFOD

CORE ACTIVITIES

1. Legal assistance

Main services to beneficiaries and core project activities implemented by the Legal unit together with a psychologist engaged within the project included:

- Daily provision of legal assistance to refugees from Croatia and BiH
- Information and counselling on various legal issues relevant for refugees
- Provision of psychosocial aid to beneficiaries
- Visits to collective centres in SCG

IAN legal officers assisted a total number of **1091 refugees** with **2045** interventions (oral and written legal assistance, return and reconstruction related issues, referral, documents, information, etc) in this one-year period. During this period **510 new clients** were provided with administrative and legal assistance as well as different personalised information from their country of origin.

Beneficiaries from the Republic of Croatia still show most interest and address IAN legal office asking for assistance in the field of property and ownership issues which is directly related to the obstacles for return.

Some of the most frequent legal services provided in IAN legal office were:

- Legal aid related to exercising rights guaranteed by the Agreement on Social Insurance between SCG and Croatia, especially for persons who receive Croatian pension and have lost refugee status in SCG,
- Legal aid in completing requests for Housing Care in Croatia,
- Legal aid related to completing requests for reconstruction of houses in Croatia,
- Legal and informational assistance related to completing documentation concerning initiation of legal proceedings related to inheritance and regulation of property relationship as a basic condition for applying for reconstruction in Croatia,
- Legal aid in the procedure of initiating the proceedings for acquiring Croatian pensions.
- Distribution of information and reminding beneficiaries about the deadline for submitting requests for Housing Care outside the Areas of Special State

Concern (previous deadline 30/6/05 was prolonged until 30/9/05) .

- Distribution of information on the Law on Foreigners, clarifying the importance of submitting this request, and assistance in this process

Beneficiaries from BiH who came to IAN asking for legal assistance were mostly interested in three issues:

- Legal assistance in implementation of certain articles from the BiH Labour Law - IAN legal advisers write submissions to OHR and complaints to certain firms in BiH who failed to establish legal labour relationship.
- Repossession of military flats - IAN has submitted 6 claims to the Constitution Court of BiH
- Regulation of pensions according to the Agreement on Social insurance ratified in July 2004 - IAN has provided assistance in realisation and transfer of pensions and regulation of health insurance.

Since most of the refugees from both Croatia and BiH have opted for integration, they very often addressed IAN legal officers asking for assistance in integration process, first of all in regulation of their status in SCG and employment.

Internally displaced persons from Kosovo have been assisted through IAN activities related to provision of informational and education. IAN has been collecting relevant information on Kosovo and featuring it on the "Kosovo Info Web-portal". IAN officers also provided personalised information to individual beneficiaries on issues interesting for them and referred them to the international NGOs implementing programs in Kosovo.

A successful go-and-see visit to Musutiste village, municipality of Suva Reka, was conducted in February 2005 where IAN representative led the villagers. After this, by the end of February 2005 IAN referred all IDP beneficiaries to DRC staff already engaged in this project and also linked them with ARC, organisation that could perform reconstruction in Kosovo. Nevertheless, IAN Field officer kept regular contact with a group of IDPs from Musutiste. They occasionally came to IAN office for advice and to share latest information from their place of origin. IAN will continue advocating for the IDPs and lobbying international and local NGOs, GOs and agencies

for improving the status of IDPs in Serbia as well as for promoting their right to return.

Field work outside the office included visits to collective centres in order to assist the most vulnerable, isolated and mostly elderly beneficiaries situated there.



Legal aid provided in cc Gamzigradska Banja, Zajecar, Sept. 2005

IAN team consisting of 1-2 legal advisers and a psychologist visited selected collective centres hosting larger number of people some of whom have been relocated there after the closing of their original collective centres.

In accordance with the National Strategy on Resolving Refugee Problems, adopted by the Government of Republic of Serbia, the Commissariat for Refugees has continued its programme of closing collective centres on the territory of Serbia. This action arouses the feeling of uncertainty, apprehension, inability to adjust to changes and the wish to stay in collective centres as long as possible.

In this period regular contact and cooperation was maintained with a local SCG association Centre for communication *Pravda* from Paraćin. An information-legal stand has been created in Paraćin in the premises of the association, where a team of legal advisers from IAN had regular sessions. Contact was also maintained with other NGOs and local trustees of the Republic Commissariat for refugees in Bajina Basta, Sabac, Zajecar, Kovin and Petrovac na Mlavi, as well as with the Republic Commissariat for Refugees.

In May 2005, IAN team has established contact with a trustee for refugees and the Red Cross representatives from Zemun Municipality hosting the largest number of refugees in the wide area of Belgrade (around 12000 refugees according to the last census conducted by the Commissariat for Refugees of the Republic of Serbia – without those who acquired SCG citizenship and ID cards). Every Thursday IAN team offered legal assistance to the refugees in the

premises of the Red Cross Zemun. Services provided during these visits were mainly directed towards writing complaints because of the loss of refugee status.

Provision of personal documents

The well known fact recognised by all agencies working with refugees is that obtaining basic personal documents (Birth Certificate and Certificate of Citizenship) is the *very first step for finding a durable solution*: either for possible decision for return (obtaining ID card and passport in Croatia, signing a contract for house reconstruction with the Croatian Government), or for living and regulating personal status in SCG (wedding, registration of child's birth, enrolment in school, acquiring SCG citizenship). Thus, for the past few years IAN has been devoting considerable efforts to enabling beneficiaries from Croatia to get their documents from Croatia. IAN legal officers have been fostering partnerships with NGOs from Croatia who have been able to raise funds for providing documents through Power of attorney for beneficiaries from Serbia.

In this period **143 new requests** with Power of attorney have been sent to Croatian partners and **302 documents arrived from Croatia** and were delivered to IAN beneficiaries.

A new type of activity offering legal information and assistance has been established within the Triangle⁴ network. Instead of the visits of representatives from Croatia and BiH to collective centres, the so called "office days" were organised in IAN office.

In 2005 info visits i.e. "office days" were organised for legal advisors from the Civic Committee of Human Rights from Zagreb, Croatia and BOSPO from Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina in June 2005 in IAN offices. The guests from the partner NGOs informed the interested IAN beneficiaries about types of assistance available as well as the current situation in Croatia and BIH.

These info-visits represent a unique opportunity for the refugees to talk about their rights with professionals who provide legal aid in their countries of origin.

⁴ Regional Network of organisations from Croatia, BiH and Serbia supported by FRESTA engaged in providing legal support to refugees in the region through info-visits. IAN is a member of the network and regularly participates in Triangle activities.

2. Educative and creative workshops

Listening to the needs of beneficiaries, IAN Repatriation centre in cooperation with IAN Telecentar has continued to organise various educational courses for refugees and IDPs to enhance their knowledge and skills.

Special interest was expressed for computer courses. Also, a considerable number of beneficiaries were interested in English language course, sewing and screen-printing courses and life skills courses. This educational support has proved to be beneficial for improvement of the psychological status of beneficiaries, due to increase of their self esteem, chances for employment and economic status.

More than 300 education courses from IAN Telecentar's offer were provided free of charge for the refugees and IDPs in this period.

Extraordinary success has been achieved within the programme of screen-printing courses. Namely, six course participants (3 refugees and 2 IDPs) who have been trained for screen-printing succeeded in finding employment in this industry and thus achieved economic independence. Such successes provide great stimulus for IAN and its work with the vulnerable population.

A.G. age 48

Refugee from Zadar, Croatia

"For a long time I have been trying to initiate some private business of my own. I have small premises where I planned to install a workshop, but I did not know in which direction to go. I had no experience with screen-printing, but a friend of mine invited me to start attending the screen-printing course together with him.

After the first few classes we already made a deal to start working in my workshop when we finish the course. We talked with our teacher about the basic things, machines and paints we needed to start the work, and we began collecting the resources.

Upon completing the course, we started making car commercials. Our work has developed in that direction, so we mainly print canvas covers for trucks, commercials, plastic sheets for refrigerator lorries, etc. So far, it goes very well.

It is really a great idea to design such a practical course that brings jobs to people. All compliments for the organisation, lectures, idea."

Creative workshops and psychosocial assistance to the refugees and IDPs was offered both in IAN office and during the field work in

collective centres. IAN psychologist (contribution of IAN Trauma Centre supported by CAFOD) is a part of the team that regularly visits collective centres and provides comprehensive assistance to refugees in the field. Psychologist's main focus was facilitating discussion on various relevant topics with the residents of collective centres, identifying their problems and providing psychological support.

For more than 4 years IAN has been cooperating with the Italian scout organisation AGESCI from Verona in programs focused on refugee and IDP children. In August 2005 for the fifth time a group of **90 Italian scouts** from this organisation spent two weeks **camping in 2 collective centres** (Bavaništanski put-Pančevo, Hotel Vrelo-Bajina Bašta).



IAN partners from Italy with the support of IAN organised creative workshops for IDP children in cc Hotel Vrelo, Aug. 2005

IAN Field officer facilitated the organisation of this visit. Through games in the open air, creative workshops, sports games and joint excursions they provided psychosocial treatment for all refugee and IDP children in these centres as well as their parents. The idea of these young scouts was also to get to know the people and their current situation, and to create new friendships with the children in the camps by joining them in their daily routine. Total number of 92 children enjoyed in these activities.

Activities focused on psychosocial support are highly appreciated among the beneficiaries, they strengthen their trust in IAN work and staff and they contribute to promoting the organisation's projects.

3. Kosovo-info web portal

During 2005 IAN continued to host and maintain the Kosovo-info web portal which is regularly updated with relevant and impartial information related to Kosovo and Metohija.

The portal is intended primarily for IDP assisting agencies. It contains news related to Kosovo and Metohija, UNMIK *Office for Communities, Returns & Minority Affairs - OCRM* (former ORC) Monthly and Weekly Update, reports of non-governmental organizations, Resolution 1244, UNMIK Official Gazette, Kosovo standards implementation plan and other relevant national and international documents and Reports on Kosovo issues, there are also KIP Newsletter and monthly schedules for Municipal and Regional Working groups in Kosovo. Some documents, reports and other available information are also featured in Albanian language together with the basic web page in Albanian. Number of relevant links is being updated on regular basis.

Following the agreement with *Unija*, a major association of IDP organisations in Serbia, IAN created a short presentation of the work of *Unija* and its members and posted it on the Kosovo-info portal.

The Web-portal has been recognised amongst the local and international NGOs as well as IDP associations as one of the key tools for information provision and exchange related to both policies and practices of solving problems of IDPs.

Great impact and success of the Kosovo-info portal is confirmed also by statistics of the visits. It is monitored regularly and it shows that the Kosovo-info page is still the most frequently visited one from the entire IAN website. **Number of hits per month is continuously increasing. In 2005 the average number of visits to the portal was 36.101⁵ per month.**

The project that enabled maintenance of the Kosovo-info Web portal funded by DRC through EAR ended in September 2005. After this period, IAN staff has continued minimum of activities on updating the portal so as to keep the portal “alive” until new funding is raised enough to enable the full scope of work on this highly relevant project.

⁵ Just as an illustration and for comparison, in the previous one year period the average number of hits per month was around 24.000.

4. Capacity building and trainings for NGOs, IDP associations and community groups

Wishing to participate in the process of enhancing education and capacities of other NGOs and refugee/IDP associations, IAN develops and delivers trainings and capacity building programs to community groups and NGOs in Serbia.

In the last one-year period following the agreement with Roma children Centre basic **computer courses were provided for 2 groups of Roma children.**

Also, a group consisting of staff members and beneficiaries of the **IDP association “Child development”** finished 4 basic computer courses in IAN as a part of their capacity building.

Within its Sustainable Peace Programme CAFOD initiated a series of capacity building trainings for its partner organisations. The first training workshop offered was **Advocacy and Lobbying Training**. This training course was designed for staff of NGOs who are current or future partners in the Sustainable Peace Programme or partners of CAFOD and IAN in other work. The course aimed at enabling participants to plan and deliver an effective advocacy strategy. IAN and CAFOD jointly organised first set of 2 modules back in 2004 for 16 participants of local NGOs in Serbia. However, due to great interest among local NGOs this training course was repeated for another group of 16 participants. This group among others included the representatives of IDP associations who are in great need of these skills. Module one for the second group of participants⁶ was held in November 2004, and Module 2 for the second group was held from 14-16 March 2005 in Belgrade. Also, individual consultations with trainer were available in March for all organisations wanting to discuss the advocacy plans they designed for the next period. Evaluation performed at the end of all course modules showed that the participants found the course highly relevant, well designed and delivered and greatly beneficial for their further advocacy activities.

⁶ The representatives of EHO, Roma Children Centre, IAN, Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, Caritas Serbia, Institute for Students' Health, Novi Sad Humanitarian Centre, UNIJA (Happy Family and Jug) attended the course.

5. Regional cooperation and advocacy initiatives

Since the beginning of the Repatriation programme, 5 years ago, IAN has been building up its partnership with related NGOs in Serbia and keeping strong regional approach and active cross-border cooperation with different civil society actors in Croatia and BiH, acting through regional Networks (SEE RAN, BHRN and Telecentars Network). Through participation in several formal and informal networks of NGOs dealing with similar issues, IAN is hoping to increase and improve its impact and contribution in resolving still numerous problems of refugees, returnees and IDPs and in Serbia and in the region.

In 2005 IAN Repatriation Unit participated in several joint advocacy initiatives of NGO groups/networks that IAN is a member of. Initiatives were the following:

LIG (Legal Initiative Group) – IAN representative in LIG attended regular meetings and participated in LIG involvement in the MARRI Access to Rights Initiatives. (MARRI - The new Stability Pact's initiative called Migration, Asylum and Refugee Return Initiative). Within MARRI initiative, an activity plan was created according to which research and advocacy projects were suggested in relation to improvement of refugee rights.

CONFLICT ANALYSES – IAN, together with a group of other Serbian NGOs, was involved in the initiative triggered by CAFOD, for conducting research work and creating a conflict analyses document. The Sustainable Peace Working Group consisting of the NGOs and imminent local experts engaged in compiling the material and writing the document organized a Round Table "Conflict Analyses in Serbia", held on 19 January 2005 in Belgrade with the aim to test and develop this document in the wider context of peer review. An impressive number of relevant people invited participated and gave great contribution and comments at the round table. This paper may serve as a good advocacy tool for joint advocacy work on a local and regional level.

TRIANGLE - *the initiative, which involves NGOs from BiH, Croatia and SCG that support and implement repatriation assistance activities across borders of the three countries through practical legal and information assistance to beneficiaries and periodical cross-border visits of legal advisers and NGO activists from BiH and Croatia to SCG.*

In cooperation with a Croatian NGO "I want to go home" in August 2005 IAN organised three round tables with refugees in SCG, local authorities representative from SCG and media representatives within the project "Connecting people". The aim was to increase the information level of refugees and their representatives (refugee associations) on the possibilities of reintegration in the local community in the Republic of Croatia. The participants were shown a documentary; they were informed about the priorities of the new local authorities in Knin, living conditions for the returnees as well as on the way in which the additional education is organised for the Serbian minority. Recommendations from these round tables have been made in hope that they will help civil society and local government representatives to make concrete result in integration and re-integration process.

- IAN Repatriation officers took active part in several workshops, public debates and regional conferences conducted in this period dealing with refugees/IDPs human rights in the region, reconciliation and lobbying for particular improvement of the vulnerable population status. The participants presented our experiences, lessons learned and main obstacles in refugee assistance in the ex-Yugoslav region:
- **KIP (Kosovo Initiative Program) Conference**, Mavrovo, Macedonia, March 2005 where the 17 partner-NGO representatives discussed its further activities within the programme. All projects are focused on reintegration of returnees and IDPs, return and regional cooperation (cross-boundary and cross-entirety).
- **DRC workshop and advocacy campaign "Repatriation to Croatia - Resolving of Remaining Reintegration Issues of Returnees from Serbia to Croatia"** within the EU funded project managed by the EAR "Support to Repatriation and Reintegration Process of Refugees Currently in Serbia to Croatia and BiH / Reintegration of Refugees" held in Belgrade, in June 2005.
- **DRC workshop and advocacy campaign "Repatriation to Croatia - Resolving of Remaining Legal and Issues Related to Incidents"**, Belgrade, September 2005.

- **Meeting of NGO representatives with Walter Kalin, special representative of the UN Secretary General on the internally displaced persons** on 17 June 2005, at OHCHR premises. In the days preceding the meeting a group of IDP assisting NGOs, including IAN wrote a letter to Kalin outlining the main problems relating to IDPs, which the representatives of these NGOs later explained to him in more detail in person. Our recommendations, especially those concerning the right to choose a durable solution and social and economic rights of the displaced persons, were included in Kalin's report.

OTHER RELEVANT ACTIVITIES

Through several **outreach activities** realised in this project period IAN presented its activities and mission to local, regional and professional public as well as donors.

On this year World Refugee Day, International Aid Network – IAN organised an exhibition of artistic photos entitled “Courage is crossing borders”. The exhibition was set up on the 20th of June in Knez Mihajlova Street.

By organising this open-air event in the main pedestrian street in Belgrade we wanted to draw attention of the wider public to the plight of refugees, celebrate their courage and resilience, and renew commitment to solving refugee problems.



*Photo exhibition in Knez Mihajlova Street,
World Refugee Day, 20 June 2005*

Through the photos depicting life in three post war societies – Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian – we intended to point to regional dimension of refugee problems emphasising the need for seeking a solution on the regional level.

IAN volunteers, wearing specially designed T-shirts with the World Refugee Day logo, distributed materials designed to raise awareness of general public of refugee issues. (photos available on http://www.ian.org.yu/dogadjaji/hrabrostjesa_cuvatinadu.htm)

Organisation of this exhibition was supported by the Serbian Refugee Council and UNHCR. IAN also participated in the exhibition of photos related to refugees arranged by the UNHCR in the Servantes Institute within the commemoration of the World Refugee Day.

In May 2005 IAN field team assisted one IAN beneficiary family that decided to return to Croatia to move out of the collective centre Kalenic. The team helped Zdravko Tišma⁷ to move out its belongings that he did not intend to take with him to Croatia.

IAN legal officer followed up on him in August 2005 when he visited Zdravko and his family in their new-old home in the village Ivosevci in Croatia. He expressed satisfaction with the progress in regulating his documents, the treatment in institutions as well as with the assistance he got from the Red Cross (he got donations in jointry for the house and some basic food supplies, and school equipment for children).



*Zdravko Tisma and his children in
collective centre Kalenic*

⁷ Zdravko Tisma participated in IAN research “Struggle in the post war community, the photo of his youngest child is included in the publication and it was also printed on the back of the T-shirts for the World Refugee Day.

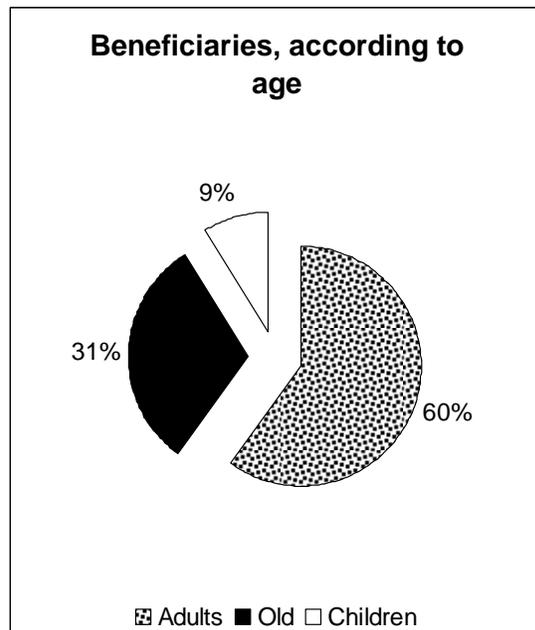
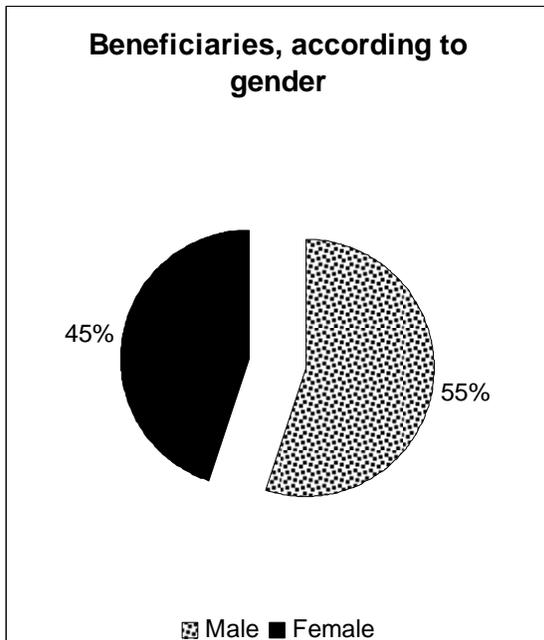
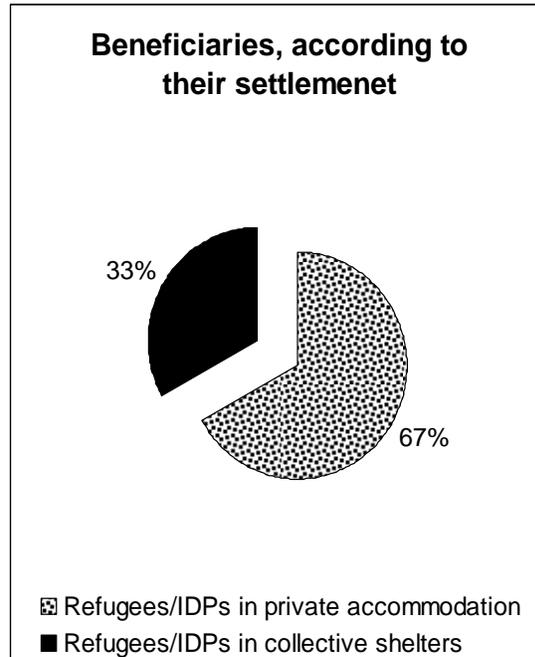
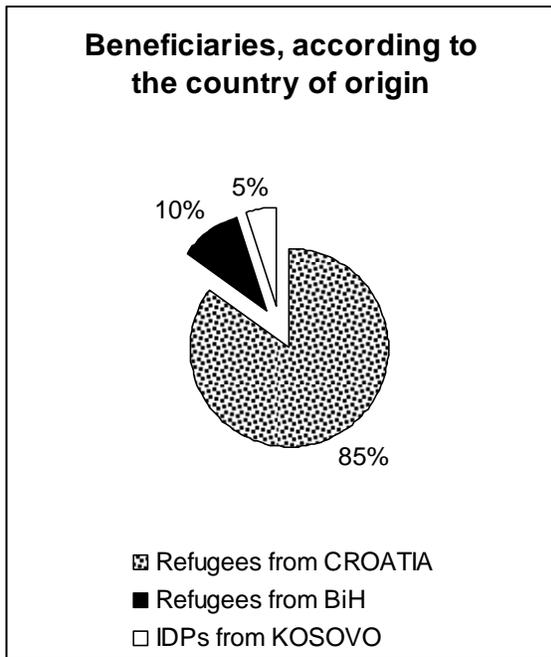
BENEFICIARIES/TARGET POPULATION

Primary beneficiaries include:

- refugees from Croatia
- refugees from BiH
- internally displaced persons from Kosovo

Great majority of our beneficiaries are refugees from Croatia since our direct services are focused first of all on refugees and among them refugees from Croatia have the greatest number of

unresolved issues. As usual, in 2005 there was slightly bigger number of males among our clients, because they are more often family representatives for return and reconstruction requests and all other official claims that need to be submitted to the state organs. Regarding the age, adults prevail among our clients. Basic statistics on our clients in the six-month reporting period is given below:



NEEDS ASSESSMENT, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

IAN Repatriation unit uses various mechanisms to monitor and evaluate project implementation and effect and consequently adjust the services provided through the future projects. In this period IAN has conducted **5 focus groups** with the aim to assess the beneficiaries' situation and needs. The focus groups were held in the collective centres Kasarna in Petrovac na Mlavi, cc Gamzigradska Banja in Zajecar, cc Krnjesevci, in IAN office and in the premises of Serbian Red Cross in Zemun, Belgrade municipality hosting 12000 refugee families.

Many of the people who participated in these focus groups have been IAN beneficiaries for a number of years. The representatives of local state institutions also participated in the focus group held in Zemun, helping in identification of the problems refugees face. The main topic of the focus groups was economic and employment status of refugees.

According to the data obtained through the discussions in these focus groups, the refugees living in these collective centres and in the municipality of Zemun, most of who are aged between 18-60, are mostly unemployed and work in grey economy. They live on the poverty line. They complained about lack of information related to employment and their labour rights, loss of hope and self-esteem regarding their professional competence and job search. They expressed the need for relevant legal information from the National Employment Service, good quality professional education and funds for starting own business. In addition to this, the participants of the focus groups also complained of many unresolved property and legal issues in Croatia and BiH including regulation of pensions.

In October 2005 upon the end of 2-year project *Empowerment for Peace - Facilitation of durable solutions for Refugees and IDPs settled in Serbia* funded by CAFOD IAN conducted a survey among 55 refugees and IDPs with the aim to screen their problems related to return/integration, current situation regarding employment, education needs. We also wanted to see whether they feel closer to reaching a durable solution, whether they feel that they are able to do more for themselves than 2 years ago, how often they have a chance for additional education, etc. In general, the results show that the refugees and

IDPs are extremely bad economic situation. 36% percent is not employed and around 50% of those who are employed are not registered which means they have no social and health insurance or pension benefits. Average income per family is only 240 EUR but 20% of the examinees have no income at all. Although 50.9% of the examinees think that knowledge acquired through seminars and courses and self-education improves an unemployed person's status at the labour market register, great percentage of them 36.4 states that they never have opportunity for further education. As the main reason for not investing more into their education they state lack of money (69,1%).

It was interesting to compare the answers to three questions with the answers to the same questions obtained through the survey 2 years ago:

To the question "*Are you closer to reaching a decision on whether to return or to stay in Serbia?*" the answers are almost identical as two years ago and show that a great number of people is still not sure which option for their future to choose (YES 21.8%, NO 23.6%, I AM NOT SURE 43.6%). However, the number of people *who have undertaken some concrete steps in order to change something in their life* has significantly increased (it was 41% and now is 60%). However, this survey also showed that the percentage of those who *do not feel more able to do something for themselves* then 2 years ago has increased. This indicates that the beneficiaries who have addressed us for assistance are among the most vulnerable ones and are in huge need of help in reaching durable solutions that would enable them to live a dignified life.

PERSPECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME

The decrease by 50% of the number of refugees (140.000 in 2005) since the last census in 2001 is explained by the Serbian Commissioner for Refugees by the fact that around 100,000 people have been granted citizenship, a small number of them returned to their places of origin or immigrated to third countries⁸. However, although a number of refugees have taken Serbian citizenship, it does not help them in solving their "refugee" daily problems. The list of those problems is still huge.

Due to extensive knowledge of current legal, social and other conditions for return and

⁸ see Serbian Government, [Press Release](#), 27.01.2005

integration as well as great experience in assisting these vulnerable groups, IAN intends to continue to provide projects aiming at facilitation of durable solutions for refugees and IDPs settled in Serbia (necessary information, legal and psychosocial assistance to refugees).

In December 2005 IAN Repatriation Unit started implementing a six-month pilot project adapted to the current needs and situation of this vulnerable population group and in accordance with the results of the above mentioned survey conducted in September 2005. Within this latest project entitled *Empowerment against poverty* IAN offers a set of services oriented towards strengthening capacities of refugees from Croatia and BIH and IDPs from Kosovo for their sustainable integration/repatriation through provision of legal aid and job search knowledge and skills. Within this project IAN provides legal aid aiming and promotion and protection of basic human rights – primarily the right to work, organise seminars on legislation related to exercising labour rights and provide computer and Life skills courses intended for raising beneficiaries' capacities for being competitive candidates at the labour market.

If the pilot project proves beneficial for the target groups IAN will develop a more comprehensive project with similar activities oriented towards the same goal and conduct a fundraising campaign to enable its implementation.

EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT

INTRODUCTION

An important factor in the further economic development of our region is the acquirement of knowledge and skills which are necessary in modern economy and society. Unfortunately the existing education system cannot efficiently fulfil these needs and therefore there is an increasing gap between the labour market demands and skills that an individual possesses. This gap is especially big within groups which are jeopardized whatsoever and do not belong to society mainstreams, which causes their bigger isolation and marginalization from the society. People belonging to such groups are refugees and displaced persons, Roma, the unemployed, minorities, those with HIV, people with disabilities, etc.

All national strategies in Serbia (The National Strategy for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons and The National Strategy for Poverty Reduction) point out the importance of solving the problem of unemployment of those belonging to the jeopardized groups as a crucial mechanism for reducing an extremely high level of poverty among the members of the jeopardized groups.

The level of unemployment in the local population is 22% whereas it is considerably higher within the jeopardized groups (up to 30% among the refugees, 60% among the Roma population and even up to 87% among the people with disabilities)⁹.

The importance of education to reducing poverty is clearly shown in the reports on the Research of the population's life standard, which imply that 69% of the poor in Serbia completed primary school or learnt a trade whereas only 2% of the poor have higher education. A small amount of money allocated for education (3,14% of GDP) has a negative influence on the availability of education for the children from the jeopardized groups as well as on the quality of education. One of the essential results of this research is a positive correlation between education and poverty.¹⁰

The increase in the educational level of the population significantly reduces the risk of belonging to groups which are below the line of poverty.

GOAL

The goal of IAN Telecentar is participants' progress so that they can actively take part in modern economy, find a new/better job and adapt themselves to the labour market needs through:

- The promotion of long-life learning as a developmental tool for all citizens
- The stimulation of the social inclusion of marginalized groups through the process of long-life learning
- Finding out the best practice in teaching and learning
- Adopting the highest standards of a society based on knowledge
- Developing and implementing the programme according to the demands of the local labour markets

Most members of the jeopardized groups do not have opportunities to be part of educational processes, which makes them even more alienated from the mainstreams of the society they live in. They cannot obtain a job or find a better one because they do not have adequate qualifications needed in modern economy, such as **computer-literacy, English language literacy, life skills and entrepreneurial skills.**

PROGRAMMES

Education department - IAN Telecentar¹¹ began its education programmes in 2001, predominantly being engaged upon particularly jeopardized groups such as refugees, displaced persons, victims of torture and traumatic stress, people on state benefit, Roma and the long-term unemployed. The programme of IAN Telecentar includes three segments: 1) a computer training course, 2) an English language course 3) a life-skills training.

1. Computer training course

The computer training courses are held according to the standard of the European Computer Driving Licence – ECDL www.ecdl.com, which is accepted in more than 140 countries including more than 6 million candidates. The ECDL is an internationally recognized certificate given for

⁹ The source of the website programme *Strategy for Poverty Reduction*

<http://www.prsp.gov.yu/engleski/vest.jsp?id=269>

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ Website www.ian.org.yu/edukacija

acquired IT knowledge to use a PC as well as an IT qualification in computer skills for computer users everywhere. IAN Telecentar has been an authorised ECDL centre since April 2005.



Computer training course

Computer training courses include:

- courses for obtaining an internationally recognized EDCL certificate – in this way the participants acquire knowledge necessary for using a computer on a daily basis both at work and at home. The training and exams include the use of a wide range of software packages Windows and Office. Those participants who pass the necessary number of exams obtain an international certificate recognized in all the EU countries, the USA, Canada, Australia...
- graphic design courses – they are advanced levels in a computer training and include the programme for photo editing (PhotoShop) and vector graphics (CorelDraw)

2. English language courses

The English language courses are held according to the Europass standards recommended by the European Council. The participants can obtain the European Language Portfolio, a document in which they can write down their own language skills and which is an internationally recognized certificate as well. The tuition is carried out in small groups (maximum 8 participants) and by graduate English teachers using modern teaching methods, dictionaries, necessary literature and audio material. The participants can use our big library as well. All levels of English (from Beginner to Advance) are taught at Telecentar.

3. Life-skills training

A life-skills training includes achieving « abilities for adoptive and positive behaviour that enable

people to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life»¹². This definition refers to a large group of psychosocial competences and interpersonal skills that help cope with the demands and challenges during life. It also refers to the abilities that enable psychosocial and social development including decision making and problem solving, critical and creative thinking, communication and interpersonal relations, self-consciousness as well as coping with emotions and causes of stress. Life-skills trainings are divided into the following modules:

Module 1: Individual Potentials Analysis

Module 2: Career planning

Module 3: Self-management training

Module 4: Assertive training

Module 5: Presentation skills

Module 6: Written communication and CV writing



Life-skills training

STAFF

IAN Telecentar full-time staff:

- 1 department manager
- 1 department coordinator
- 3 computer trainers (possessing ECDL and Microsoft certificates)
- 2 English teachers (graduated from the Faculty of Philology, Department of English Language and Literature)

¹² The World Health Organization definition

MEMBERSHIP

IAN Telecentar is a member of:

- The European Computer Driving Licence foundation and an authorised test centre for issuing internationally recognized ECDL certificates,
- the Foreign Language Centres Section of the Serbian Chamber of Commerce and the European Language Portfolio distributor
- the Balkan network of IAN Telecentar, which has its branches in Serbia (Belgrade, Novi Sad), Croatia (Zagreb, Slavonski Brod), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Travnik, Prijedor) and Macedonia (Gostivar). IAN Telecentar is focused on promotions, development and provision of services which help participants and partners adopt the highest standards of information society.

- *Lessening the attitude of blaming others and ill circumstances for personal troubles*, participants now show the attitude of accepting responsibility for their own future
- The most significant changes have been spotted in how they react to their competences, above all, professional ones. The participants now feel *professionally more competent and capable*.

The positive change does not only apply to the overall psychological status. The participants now show a much *bigger intention of searching for a job* than before they started with the programme. They believe that they have a chance of finding a job and that losing one is not only a personal catastrophe but an opportunity to progress their career, they believe that their future predominantly depends on themselves and that they have enough quality to influence the decisions of their potential future employers.

RESULTS

Over 2000 participants have finished our programmes of free education so far.

Courses Evaluation

At the end of each course participants fill in an evaluation questionnaire. The evaluation checks participants' satisfaction with course contents, teaching quality, classroom equipment quality, etc. According to the sample of 300 participants, these are the average marks (5 being the highest):

- Course contents quality – average mark 4.7
- Teaching quality – average mark 4.8
- Overall quality of courses – average mark 4.7

Psychological benefit

The second level of evaluation is testing participants' psychological status at the beginning and in the end of our education programmes. The results after long-lasting education programmes (minimum 3 months) are the following:

- *Overall improvement of the participants' psychological status*
- *Reduction of the level of emotional instability and destructive aggressiveness*
- *Improvement of the level of conscientiousness*

Finding employment

Finally, the most important result is that the participants have bigger chances of finding a new/better job after participating in our education programmes. The percentage of the participants in some programmes who found a job afterwards is up to 50%.

Participants' comments

«I have been in labour market for 10 years, where I heard of this course. I applied for a training before, but my careers officer never sent me to any, because in his record I was somebody who didn't want to work...I didn't expect anything from the course because I knew nothing about computers. What I achieved is unexpected success for me.» - S.M. (40)

«I am very satisfied with what I learnt and with the trainers. I think I will be able to use the acquired knowledge in the future.» – Lj.M. (32)

«Life skills are great. I believe that each of us (women) agree that life-skills turned out to be something we didn't expect. The impression after the first life-skills training was fantastic. Literally, I had never had such a course before this one. It is utterly useful and I believe it is worth participating in no matter if we use the acquired knowledge at work or in life. We heard a lot of advice and a lot of stories from each other, which, I think, are absolutely useful.»

«Most of us were sceptical about this course, that they wouldn't fulfil their promises. However, life-skills helped us become stronger, believe ourselves and hope for something better no matter of the situation. » - J.P. (33)

«Two months ago I got a job in a primary school. When I started working I thought of leaving the course. Luckily, I didn't do it and I am so happy because of that»

D.K. (29) found a job in a primary school during the course

«The trainers inspire confidence and give us a possibility to think about life»

J.R. (43)

CLIENTS

These are the figures of clients in 2005:

Computer courses	534
English language courses	136
Life-skills trainings	192

The clients belong to all categories: refugees and displaced persons, single parents, the unemployed, people on state benefit, victims of torture and their family members, local population.

The clients were referred to us from other departments of IAN Telecentar, by the National Employment Service, local offices of the Commissariat for Refugees, other NGOs and most often they would come on the recommendation of other clients

DONORS

The programme of IAN Telecentar is supported by the following donors: Microsoft, FRESTA, UNESCO and TROCAIRE whereas a part of the IAN Telecentar programme is financially supported through commercial courses.

PROJECT

1. Belgrade Telecentar

The goal of the project: the promotion of long-lasting learning as a developmental tool for all citizens, the promotion of social inclusion of

marginalized groups into the process of long-lasting learning, the search for and application of the best teaching practices, programme development according to labour market demands

Target group: Refugees and displaced persons, single parents, the unemployed, victims of torture, people on state benefit

Activities and services:

1. *Free courses* – 424 participants attended free IT courses, 88 free English courses and 64 attended free life-skills trainings within this project.
2. *Creating our own capacities* – IAN Telecentar has been an authorised ECDL test centre since April 2005. ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence) is an internationally recognized certificate for demonstrating IT skills. All our trainers are certified ECDL and Microsoft training professionals. IAN Telecentar has developed two new modules: Basic Information Technologies and Data Base. IAN Telecentar trainers are entrusted with developing 8 new modules within the computer courses. The modules are intended to train participants to be web designers. They are: Website Aesthetics, HTML, Dreamweaver 1 and 2, JavaScript, Flash, Fireworks and PHP&MySQL. All IT trainers have continued their education: two of them are attending Microsoft professional courses and one of them is participating in ECDL Advanced courses. Our English language section has become a member of the Foreign Language Centres Section of the Serbian Chamber of Commerce. This section will soon start with issuing the European Language Passport – an internationally recognized certification of language competence. The IT trainers have developed two data basis: for administration of groups and for administrating ECDL exams.

Cooperation with organizations/institutions: Roma Heart, Roma Children Centre

Donor: FRESTA

2. Life-skills development

The goal of the project: building a training team which will make a life-skills programme and train employees in other Telecentars as well as other individuals and organizations

Target group: Refugees and displaced persons, single parents, the unemployed, victims of torture, people on state benefit

Activities and services:

1. Researching existing trends and identifying best practices and trainings for life-skills trainers
2. Participating (of the team members) in a trainers training for all chosen modules
3. A detailed development of plans and programmes for the following modules: Potentials analysis, Career planning, Self-management, Assertive training, Presentation skills, Written communication and CV writing

Cooperation with organizations/institutions: other Telecentars

Donors: FRESTA, UNESCO

3. Strengthening of unemployed women

The goal of the project: The strengthening of unemployed women through IT and life-skills education, making models for efficient education of the unemployed, establishing official cooperation with the National Employment Service and informing the public about the problems of unemployed women in our country.

Target group: Unemployed women



Handing out of ECDL certificates

Activities and services:

1. *IT and life-skills trainings.* All women were enabled to take part in all 7 IT modules and 6 life-skills modules. Over 250 school lessons were held in total. In the end of the project (instead of 12 foreseen women) 32 women completed all the courses and obtained ECDL certificates. Six participants found employment during the courses whereas three participants found it afterwards.
2. *Practical application and mentorship.* All participants can use our department resources (computers, the Internet, printer). Every participant has her mentor who is experienced in psychotherapy practice with clients. A mentor's role is advising and counselling the participants in the process of finding new

employment. The participants can also volunteer in our organization. Some of the women are engaged in maintaining the website with the information on Kosovo and Metohija <http://www.ian.org.yu/kosovo-info/>, while the others are responsible for the paperwork regarding course participants in IAN Telecentar.

Cooperation with organizations/institutions: the National Employment Service

Donor: UNESCO

4. Microsoft Unlimited Potentials

The goal of the project: Increasing computer literacy and practical skills in using Information Technology among vulnerable groups (refugees and displaced persons, victims of torture, Romai, etc.) which are capable of working as well as increasing the possibilities for their employment

Target group: Refugees and displaced persons, single parents, the unemployed, victims of torture, people on state benefit

Activities and services: *Free education.* 800 free courses for jeopardized categories. Education includes four courses (Windows, Word, Excel and the Internet+E-mail), two of which are free according to participants wish.

Cooperation with organizations/institutions: the Commissariat for Refugees

Donor: Microsoft

5. Commercial courses

The goal of the project: IAN Telecentar is the first sector within the NGO IAN, which started with charging solvent persons for its own services. IAN Telecentar is an education enterprise which was set up at the beginning of March, 2005 and which invests all its profit in the development of new courses and free education for the jeopardized categories.

Target group: Local population

PLANS AND PROSPECTS

The IT trainers in IAN Telecentar will have developed 8 new courses for modules for web designers by the middle of 2006. During 2006 IAN Telecentar will be developing according to the ECDL standards. Our plan is to become a Microsoft education centre by the end of 2006. We are planning to develop two new modules - literacy and numeracy - in cooperation with Telecentar Zagreb and a module for secondary school pupils in cooperation with Telecentar Novi Sad. IAN Telecentar's

coordinator participated in a ten-month-online course «Advanced Certificate in Online Learning» organized by CIPD. The development of online courses is the next step and a new medium in the development of modules.

Regarding our English language section, we are planning to introduce the EAQUALS/ALTE standards supported by the European Council. Introducing the European Language Portfolio is the next step towards the standardization of the English language section.

We are also planning to apply for projects advertisement by FRESTA, UNESCO, Microsoft and the EU in the following period as well as to adapt our programmes to people with special needs (deaf and dumb and people in the wheelchair).

RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

INTRODUCTION

IAN has a yearlong experience in organising and conducting research studies. Since its foundation, all IAN projects related to direct assistance to beneficiaries included also collection of data on war traumatisation and its effects, screening beneficiaries' needs and evaluation of services provided. Data bases built since 1997 until present contain data on more than 11000 beneficiaries of various IAN programs and other war affected persons. Being the organisation implementing programs for rehabilitation of trauma and torture victims, we are in daily direct contact with people who survived various war sufferings and we have a chance to perform diagnostics, provide treatment and monitor changes. The knowledge acquired is being used to improve the quality of our services, for the benefit of our beneficiaries, and also to acquire new knowledge and learn from experience. Data and findings that we have come to have been presented through publications and presentations at conferences, network meetings and to consortiums we are involved in, as well as through educations and trainings organised for professionals working in institutions, final years graduates and postgraduates.

Since 2002 IAN has been conducting special research projects. In 2005, when the research projects started engaging a significant part of IAN human resources and budget an idea has been initiated to establish a special organisational unit of IAN that would conduct researches. The researches should contribute to establishing and promoting good practice in psychological diagnostics and measuring, in compliance with the highest methodological and ethical standards. Their aim is to improve mental health and the quality of life and psychological growth, to build the capacities for adapting to fast changes in society, especially of vulnerable groups such as victims of war trauma or torture.

STAFF MEMBERS

Research projects has realised in cooperation with other IAN program departments. Since 2005 four staff members are employed in Research Department, 2 full time and 2 half time.

PROJECTS AND DONORS

Research project active in 2005 were:

- **STRUGGLE IN THE POST WAR COMMUNITY** - Regional research on the living conditions, mental health, position on repatriation/integration and human rights status of refugees, returnees, displaced persons and local population in Serbia, Croatia and BiH, (project period: January 2004 – May 2005, funded by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the FRESTA/NAB programme)
- **STOP** - Treatment seeking and treatment outcomes in people suffering from PTSD following war and migration in the Balkans, (project period: August 2002 – January 2006,

Funded by the European Commission within Framework Programme 5)

- **PBPTSD** - Psychobiology of Posttraumatic Stress Disorders (PTSP), (project period: October 2004 – September 2007, Funded by the European Commission within Framework Programme 6)

1. STRUGGLE IN THE POST WAR COMMUNITY - Regional research on the living conditions, mental health, position on repatriation/integration and human rights status of refugees, returnees, displaced persons and local population in Serbia, Croatia and BiH.

"STRUGGLE IN THE POST-WAR COMMUNITY" is a research oriented towards refugee and returnee communities in the Balkan region, aimed at screening and describing factors important for finding a durable solution for refugees and IDPs. Comprehensive regional research was conducted on the living conditions, mental health, position on repatriation/integration and human rights status of refugees, returnees, displaced persons and local population settled in Serbia, Croatia and BiH. The obtained data have provided a complex overview of various aspects of refugee and returnee reality, including housing issue, employment status and income, conditions and possibilities for return or integration, perception of the situation in the environment, general psychological status and mental health, violation of basic human rights, war and post-war victimisation, social distance towards other nationalities.

The research is unique for its scope and regional character. It has been realized through the initiative and cooperation of the civil sector - partner non-governmental organisations from the Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Specific objectives:

- look into the current living conditions and material status of returnees and refugees, compared to one another and with the domicile population;
- explore their positions towards integration and return, potentials and conditions considered necessary for integration or return, as well as to what extent the expectations of returnees have been fulfilled;
- explore the human rights status of returnees and refugees, in comparison with one another and with the domicile population;
- look into the ethnic distance of returnees and refugees towards other nationalities, compared to one another and with the domicile population;
- scrutinise current psychological status and mental health of returnees and refugees, in comparison with one another and with the domicile population;

The regional research was carried out on a sample of 1501 examinees: refugees, returnees, displaced persons and local population settled in Serbia, Croatia and BiH.

Distribution of examinees with regard to civil status and country/entity

		Federat ion BIH	Republ ika Srpska	Croatia	Serbia	Total
returnee	N	182	122	223		527
	%	43.6%	45.4%	43.7%		35.3%
refugee	N	130	90	135	146	501
	%	31.2%	33.5%	26.5%	49.5%	33.6%
domicile resident	N	105	57	152	149	463
	%	25.2%	21.2%	29.8%	50.5%	31.1%

Project partners:

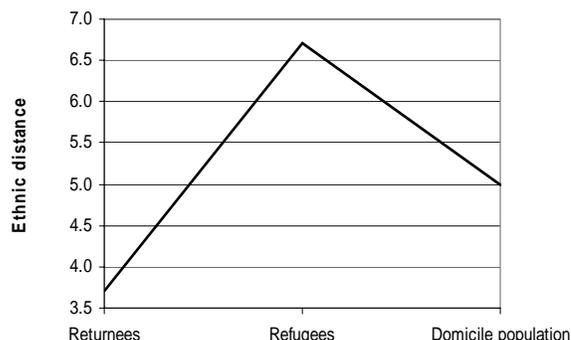
- International Aid Network IAN, Belgrade;
- Human Rights Bureau, Tuzla;
- Dalmatian Solidarity Committee (DOS offices: Split, Knin, Benkovac);
- Centre for Development, Tolerance and Activism (CRTA), Karlovac and
- Youth Council Milići.

Organisations are members of SEE RAN and BHRN FRESTA Networks.

See more at <http://www.see-ran.org/>

Project was realised in the period: January 2004 – May 2005

Funded by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the FRESTA/NAB programme.

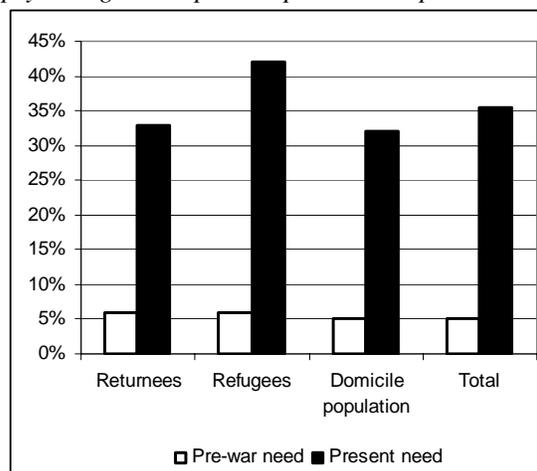


Average ethnic distance among groups

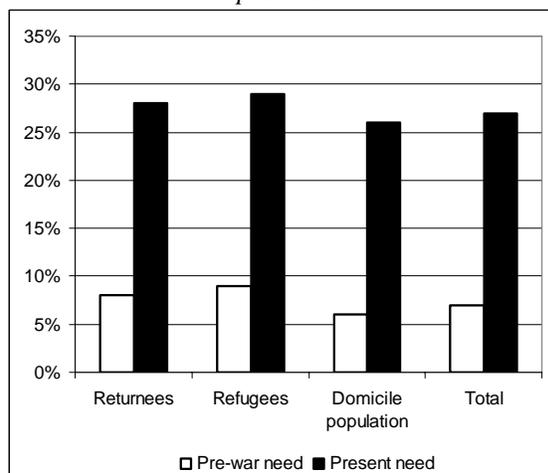
Research findings indicate that social distance among ex-Yugoslav ethnic groups is still very high and represents a serious psychological obstacle for return and reconciliation.

We have compared groups of returnees, refugees and domicile population in respect to the overall social distance and results show clearly that social distance is an important factor of return: refugees have the strongest social distance while returnees have lowest social distance, even comparing to the domicile population.

Subjective impression of the need for psychological help at the present and pre-war



Use of psychotropic medication at the present and pre-war



Subjective reporting of psychological status, help seeking and needs for assistance, before the war and at the present time (2004) shows a dramatic deterioration of mental health status in all groups of examinees: returnees, refugees, but also in the domicile population. Refugees reported the highest need for psychological help and also more frequent use of psychotropic medication.

Promotion

During 2005 several public presentations were held in the region and the results were presented to various groups of audience and publication promotion events were organised in the region.

The research was presented at the DRC Conference “Repatriation to Croatia – Removal of remaining obstacles related to housing” held in April 2005 in Belgrade. The research was seen as relevant data source for guiding new direction within latest FRESTA/NAB Program document.

The content of the publication was enriched by the selection of the photos from the region, taken at the locations where returnees/refugees are living by a professional photographer, Marc Schneider.

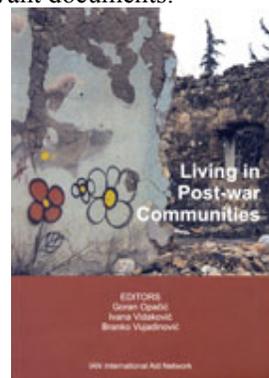
Selection of the photos available at <http://www.ian.org.yu/fotografije/MarcSchneider/index.htm>



The public presentations of the book “**STRUGGLE IN THE POST WAR COMMUNITY**” with photo exhibition “**COURAGE IS CROSSING BORDERS**” were organised in the region:

- Sarajevo 3 -7. May 2005.
- Belgrade 4 -19. May 2005.
- Knin 9 -14. May 2005.
- Tuzla 17 - 20. May 2005.
- Milici 21 - 25. May 2005.
- Vukovar 27 - 31. May 2005

National and International agencies show interest for the research findings, particularly regarding living conditions, perspectives for return and human right status of our interviewees. Main research findings are addressed and quoted in several relevant documents.



Book available for download at <http://www.ian.org.yu/publications/>

“The importance of this book is manifold. The research presented herein is one of the rare researches on the problems of refugees and problems of those who decided to return to the country they fled. Topics included in the research are relevant for resolving yearlong problems of refugees on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. They are also important for understanding the factors that could contribute to a more successful return of the refugees. Results given in this

monograph may be inspiring for opening a dialogue among various government and non-government actors who could provide support in resolving this issue in a more efficient way”

An extract from the review by prof dr Jelena Vlajkovic.



Promotion of the publication and photo exhibition, REX-Cultural centre B92, Belgrade, May 2005

Some recommendations for further action and directions that refugee programmes should take could be made, based on the research findings and conclusions:

- Psychosocial programmes should prioritize the work on active dealing with posttraumatic sequelae, establishing the internal locus of control, resuming the responsibility for one's own life and fulfilling own potentials, as well as strengthening the feeling of global competence through creating and implementing a life plan made of small steps and clearly operationalised goals.
- Economic empowerment programmes, education and re-qualification are important preconditions for enabling people to actively face life in a transformed post-war community and in times of rapid changes and transition.
- Refugees and returnees are indubitably under particular risk of violations of human rights and still require special non-institutionalised aid in protection and exercising their rights both in the country of origin and the country of current residence.
- All data indicate that the issue of displacement, of repatriation in particular, represents a complex security-political, socio-economic, legal and psychological problem requiring a concerted action in several areas. As confirmed by the experience in the region, partial attempts can

rarely yield significant results. Regrettably, the donors - without the help of which refugees and displaced could hardly resolve their status – have started pulling out from the region and winding down their assistance to return programmes. We hope that the results of this research would prompt them to reconsider some of their strategic decisions.

2. STOP - Treatment seeking and treatment outcomes in people suffering from PTSD following war and migration in the Balkans



The project aims to provide an empirical basis for designing care programmes for people suffering from posttraumatic stress following war and migration in the Balkans who currently do not seek treatment, and to improve the cost-effectiveness of treatment programmes for those patients who are cared for in specialised centres.

Specific objectives are:

- to understand why most people suffering from posttraumatic stress do not seek treatment and what coping strategies they use
- to establish to what extent research results gained in populations who took refuge outside the post war area apply to those who stayed in the Balkans
- to benchmark what outcomes, i.e. drop out rates and changes in symptoms, quality of life and social functioning, are to be expected for different subgroups of patients in specialised centres
- to identify treatment components that are associated with better outcomes across centres
- to establish estimate how the costs of individual care packages for patients in specialised centres are linked to outcome

Target group for the research are persons suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder after war and migrations in Balkans, primarily those who seek assistance in specialised centres, but also those who do not seek help.

Project partners:

Barts and London School of Medicine, Queen Mary, University of London, UK

International Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims- Zagreb, Croatia

Hospital and Polyclinic for Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, Carl Gustav Carus, Faculty of Medicine of the University of Technology, Germany

Centre for Torture Victims Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina

International Aid Network, Belgrade, Serbia

Centre for Psychotrauma, Psychiatric Clinic, University of Rijeka, Croatia

Centre for the Economics of Mental Health, Institute of Psychiatry, London, UK

Project is realised in the period: August 2002 – January 2006

Funded by the European Commission within Framework Programme 5

See more about project on

<http://www.stopstudy.co.uk/>

In former Yugoslavia, more than four million people are estimated to suffer from on-going and severe psychological symptoms of post-traumatic stress having experienced traumatic events related to war and migration in the 1990s. Whilst some patients receive different forms of care in specialised centres, the majority of the people affected do not seek treatment.

This project aims to understand the barriers to treatment and coping strategies of people that do not seek treatment use and to evaluate how existing treatment programmes change patients' symptoms, quality of life and social functioning. It also identifies how costs of treatment are linked to outcome.

It will bring together a critical mass of researchers utilising complementary expertise from member states and Balkan countries. The findings will help to design rehabilitation programmes for current non-treatment seekers and improve the cost-effectiveness of treatment programmes in specialised centres.



STOP Consortium meeting, Belgrade



STOP Consortium meeting, London

3. PBPTSD - Psychobiology of Posttraumatic Stress Disorders



The aim of the study is to yield new knowledge on relations between: basic psychological variables and PTSD, biological variables and PTSD and biological and basic psychological variables in health and in PTSD. In addition, the foreseen benefits of the project include: development of combined psycho-biological batteries for PTSD screening, diagnosing and risk factors assessing, improvement of psychological instruments for measuring PTSD, implementation of new biological markers for PTSD, recommendation for the improvement of combined psycho and pharmacotherapy of PTSD.

Specific objectives are:

- Exploring relationship between PTSD and psychological parameters and relationship

between PTSD and neuropsychological parameters

- Exploring sleep disturbance in PTSD
- Exploring metabolic functions disorder in PTSD
- Exploring HPA axis function in PTSD
- Exploring genetic polymorphism in PTSD
- Formulating recommendations related to a combined diagnostic battery for PTSD and its application in community work.

The interdisciplinary study will include 1000 examinees. Primary target group are persons with early traumatisation. Specific subgroups of examinees included into the study are related to persons with symptoms of current and lifelong posttraumatic stress, as well as traumatised persons who did not develop these symptoms. Control groups will include persons without experience of early traumatisation from the region of Balkans and EU countries.

Project partners:

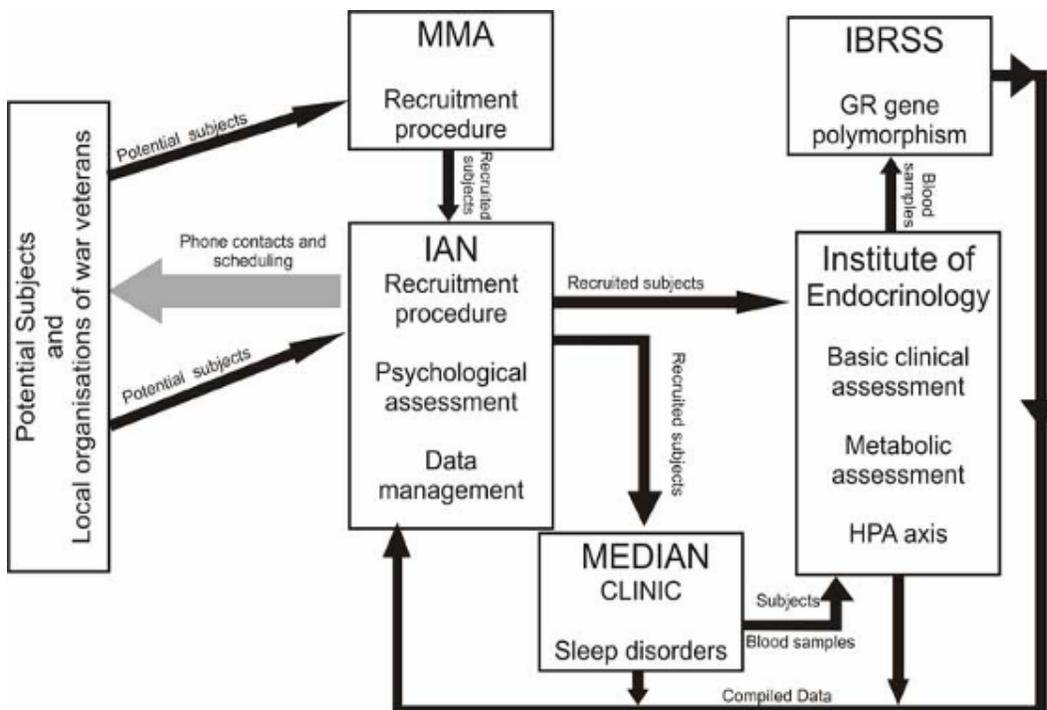
- University Medical Centre, Utrecht, Netherlands
- International Aid Network, Belgrade, Serbia
- Institute of Endocrinology, Diabetes & Metabolic Disease, Belgrade, Serbia
- Institute for Biological Research “Sinisa Stankovic”, Belgrade, Serbia
- Military Medical Academy, Belgrade, Serbia
- Vinca Institute of Nuclear Sciences, Belgrade, Serbia
- Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London, United Kingdom
- Psychiatric Clinic, Medical Faculty, University of Rijeka, Croatia
- Specialization School of Psychiatry, University of Bari, Italy

Project is realised in the period: October 2004 – September 2007

Funded by the European Commission within Framework Programme 6

See more about project on <http://www.pbptsd.org/>
 Within the PBPTSD study, recruitment and initial assessment of a large number of people with war experiences: war veterans, refugees, ex-detained persons, etc. started in February, while the actual process of clinical and psychological assessment started in April, 2005. They are following recruitment and research procedure described below.

PBPTSD Study protocol



Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

is the most common war-related psychiatric disorder occurring among combat veterans and other people exposed to war zone stress. In addition to health problems, this disorder causes numerous long-term psychological and socioeconomic damages.



Neuropsychological assessment, IAN, Belgrade

Current opinion is that the best results in PTSD understanding, diagnosis and treatment could be achieved by integrating psychological, biological and pharmacotherapeutical approaches.

Our project aimed to light up the interrelations in psychological and biological factors in PTSD, and to better understand the essential biological phenomena and mechanisms underlying pathogenesis of different PTSD psychophysical profiles. The new knowledge expected to originate from our studies should contribute not only to biologically founded discrimination between PTSD subtypes, and between PTSD and other co morbid psychiatric disorders.



Determination of the functional parameters of the glucocorticoid receptor (GR) in peripheral blood lymphocytes, Institute for Biological Research, Sinisa Stankovic, Belgrade

OTHER RELEVANT ACTIVITIES

Aiming to become a leading research/educational institution in the field of stress-related disturbances IAN is committed to share knowledge and to contribute to the on-going mental health and educational reforms. Several lectures regarding multidisciplinary work on PBPTSD project were take place during 2005 delivered by professionals for IAN, MMA, Belgrade Institute for Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolic Diseases and Institute for Biological research "Sinisa Stankovic".

Previous research results have been presented to the scientific community at national and international conferences, and published in national and international scientific journals. The results concerning preparatory project phase and validation of some of the psychological instruments used in PBPTSD study have been reported at several scientific conferences:

- Belgrade, XI scientific meeting on Empirical Research in Psychology, February, 3-4th, 2005;
- Washington, 113th Annual Convention, August 18-21st, 2005;
- Budapest, 8th European Conference of Psychological Assessment, August 31st -September, 4th, 2005;
- Munich, 13th European Congress of Psychiatry, April 3-5th, 2005;
- New York, The Psychobiology of PTSD, A Decade of Progress, September 10-12th, 2005

Professionals and selected group of students have been trained in using advanced diagnostic techniques and latest edition of instruments for psychological assessment. Five days training in administration of neuropsychological testing was organized for 16 psychologists in the second week of February, 2005. Education and training in administration of the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM IV (SCID) and structured interview for trauma was held during March and April 2005.

PERSPECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME

Development plans of the Research Department within IAN are related to building and strengthening the capacities of IAN for researching stress and its effect on human behaviour.

Apart from the work on the project Psychobiology of PTSD in 2006 and 2007, additional efforts will be invested in analysis of data in the existing databases collected from clients and beneficiaries of IAN programs since 1997 till today. We expect that the data gathered and experience acquired through work with stress and trauma will represent guidelines for improvement of the battery and the procedure for diagnosing posttraumatic stress disorder.

Transfer of knowledge and mentoring in research work, trainings for administering new generation tests and other specialised trainings for professionals and students, are also regular activities implemented by IAN Research Department in cooperation with other IAN Departments. We hope that the role of IAN in education and improvement of knowledge in the field of psychology will be formally recognised through the memorandum of understanding agreement on cooperation with the Department for Clinical Psychology of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade where IAN would be recognised as an educational support centre of the Belgrade University.

Special professional challenge to which IAN could respond with its expertise and capacities is designing software for administering basic test battery for psychological assessment and also work on standardisation of psychological of psychological instruments for assessment of individual differences in our population. This would represent a continuation of the current practice of IAN as an organisation initiating changes, improving and transferring knowledge in domestic and international environment.

In this perspective, an important aspect of engagement in the following period will be also initiation of new partnerships and international projects, establishing a European network of organisations and institutions exploring stress and trauma, and organising a scientific conference where the results of the research work so far would be presented to local and international professional audience.

LESSONS LEARNED AND PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

During this year IAN continues its work in development services – efficient and effective answering to the needs of the vulnerable populations.

IAN staffs and clients find this work of crucial importance and in the core of IAN identity. IAN is determined to continue with development of the services

Further ongoing education and supervision of the staff is needed considering the fact that staffs are dealing with difficult issues that our clients are bringing

IAN services are well recognised among our beneficiaries and mouth to mouth advertisement of services is showing that our work is valuable but in the same time clients are confused about IAN, some of them not knowing meaning of the name, relation between departments and IAN values and policies. To invite clients to contribute the same way they are contributing to the service development to the IAN organisation and to promote IANs work.

Further efforts needs to be put in promotion of:

- Visibility of IAN work is very low and we have planed to increase our visibility on several levels, among clients, within organisation partners and donors and in wider public.

- Finishing reorganisation of the IAN departments and finish IAN strategic plan with special emphasise on formation of international Supervisory Board.

- To invite clients to contribute the same way they are contributing to the service development to the IAN organisation and to promote IANs work

FINANCIAL REPORT

Donation deposits during year 2005 are shown at the amount of CSD 54,254 thousands, which make EUR 646,367.27 or US\$ 765,234.91. The donations are presented in the following tables:

DONOR	DONATIONS 2005			%
	CSD	EUR	US\$	
<i>FRESTA/NAB</i>	11,923,842.67	142,057.39	168,181.83	22%
<i>CAFOD, , Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (UK)</i>	15,658,546.78	186,551.63	220,858.90	29%
<i>EC, European Commission</i>	20,148,434.47	240,042.92	284,186.96	37%
<i>UNVFVT, United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture</i>	1,869,440.40	22,272.00	26,367.83	3%
<i>OTHERS</i>	4,653,735.68	55,443.33	65,639.39	9%
TOTAL	54,254,000.00	646,367.27	765,234.91	100%

DONATIONS 2005	CSD	EUR
Unused assets 01/01/2005	10,436,000.00	124,331.64
Donations deposits during the year	54,254,000.00	646,367.27
Used assets during year 2005	-49,290,000.00	-587,227.53
Remaining unused assets	15,400,000.00	183,471.37
Underestimated item	1,082,000.00	12,890.65
Condition on 31/12/2005	16,482,000.00	196,362.02

PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT

In the year 2005 IAN made profit of CSD 355 thousands, which makes the difference between total incomes and total expenses which are shown in the following table:

Result of current business	Incomes in CSD 000	Incomes EUR	Expenses in CSD 000	Expenses EUR	Profit/loss in CSD 000	Profit/loss EUR
Business	48,097	573,014.46	46,529	554,333.74	1,568	18,680.72
Financial	1,305	15,547.41	625	7,446.08	680	8,101.33
Other	85	1,012.67	1,978	23,565.35	(1,893)	(22,552.68)
Total	49,487	589,574.54	49,132	585,345.16	355	4,229.37

BUSINESS EXPENSES

Business expenses are balanced at the amount of CSD 46,529 thousand or EUR 554,333.74:

Description	Amount (in CSD 000)	Amount EUR
Material costs	2,344	27,925.77
Costs of salaries, salaries compensations and other personal expenses	28,914	344,473.46
Costs of amortization	885	10,543.65
Other business expenses	14,386	171,390.86
Total	46,529	554,333.74

Material costs are CSD 2,344 thousands. These are the expenditures of the office material (CSD 876 thousands), petrol (CSD 567 thousands), electricity (CSD 446 thousands) and other expenses (CSD 434 thousands).

In year 2005 costs of salaries, salaries compensations and other personal expenses are CSD 28,914 thousands and they include the costs of the gross salaries (CSD 14,837 thousands), agreements on service (2,688 gross), agreements on authorship (9,928 gross), expenses of business trips (accommodation, food, transportation: total of CSD 1,262 thousands) and Youth Organization expenses of CSD 199 thousands.

Expenses of amortization are accounted at the amount of CSD 885 thousands. The account is made by the proportional method.

Other business expenses are balanced at CSD 14,386 thousands. They consist of the production services expenses and other non-material expenses. Materially significant expenses are: Rental expenses 4,014 thousands; Health service expenses 2,408; PTT expenses 1,490 thousands; Expenses of legal services 997 thousand; Expenses of the professional training and education 569 thousands; Expenses of publications and print 342 thousands and other.