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Centar za edukaciju i savjetovanje žena
Center for Education and Counselling of Women
Račićeva 9, 10 000 Zagreb, Tel. & Fax +385 1 233 24 16
e-mail: CESI@ zamir.net

ANNUAL REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

Center for Education and Counselling of Women is a women's NGO established in 1997 in response to problems of the violation of human rights, in particular minority and women's rights, nationalism, militarisation and the deterioration of economic standards in the post-war period. It was founded by members from several women's and peace initiatives all of whom have many years of experience working with women war survivors. CESI is also a member of the Antiwar Campaign of Croatia and the Women's Network of Croatia.

Our mission is the advancement of the status of women and the building of a civil society in Croatia.

Our aims are:

- empowering and supporting women's groups and civil initiatives within local communities
- creating the necessary conditions for the development of co-operation and solidarity among women of different origins
- developing tolerance and multi-ethnic dialogue in the post-war society
- advocating and promoting women's and minority rights, as well as general human rights

CESI is one of the few women's ngo's which works extensively at the local level throughout the Republic of Croatia addressing the special needs of women in multi-ethnic communities where relations between the different ethnic groups were deeply undermined during the war. CESI team members have extensive field experience of working with these marginalised groups, especially refugees and displaced persons. The team includes facilitators and trainers experienced in: providing psychosocial support, such as trauma counselling; humanitarian aid and practical assistance for women in the form of self-help groups, education and training programs; help with referrals for individuals dealing with national and international organisations; support for individuals in their contact with local authorities and institutions. CESI members have also organised training for women's groups in Croatia and Bosnia in basic counselling and group work, management and non-violent communication skills, and are widely respected in the communities in which they have worked.

Our organisational structure reflects our general emphasis on women's empowerment. Each member is encouraged to develop her skills via an equal sharing of responsibilities and rights. Five members of the Governing Board are responsible for CESI's overall vision and everyday organisational planning and decision-making, and

an Advisory Board composed of five volunteers professionals monitor the implementation of CESI programs.

Education, ongoing training and workshops are an integral part of developing our professional expertise and learning new areas of specialisation. These are organised by CESI on behalf of all its members. Our organisational plan also includes the recruiting and training of new volunteers to work directly for CESI or provide local assistance with CESI projects in the field. CESI members also attend training programs, seminars and panel discussions organised by various organisations, and we have participated in several conferences focused on the role of women.

ACTIVITIES

Education and Training

According to our activities previously established in different parts of Croatia, we have assessed the needs of local groups. We had organised and performed training sessions for different groups on several issues.

The workshops were on communication skills, non-violent conflict resolution, organisational development, as well as fund-raising and leadership skills. We have provided strategic planning and supervision of the project, too.

The training was provided for the following groups: Women's Club Pakrac, Women's Action Rijeka, Vita Ploče, Committee for Human Rights Karlovac, Women's Group Vojnić, "Step into Tomorrow Project" of Anti-War Campaign.

Gender Sensitivity

Gender sensitivity workshops were held for the fifteen volunteers from Zagreb, Velika Gorica, Karlovac and Križevci - social workers, psychologists, activists and students who will be engaged and trained to work with youth. The first series of four training sessions were held in Zagreb.

Psycho-Social Assistance

Counselling for two groups of girls was organised in co-operation with Autonomous Cultural Factory (Attack), the project, that is gathering young people in various activities, cultural and political. Another support group was formed in the Home for the Children in Zagreb.

30 girls attended the group meetings. As the average age of the participants was 17 years, most of them have been attending secondary school and some of them are in the University. The aim of the meeting were to offer them safe space for discussion, to provide information on issues young women are interested in; and enable them to make informed choices and thus prevent abusive relations.

Media/Advocacy Campaigns

Panels

CESI had organised several lectures and panel discussions in co-operation with local groups under the common title "Life Without Violence - It's Our Right".

The panel discussions were held in Karlovac together with Committee for Human Rights including the presentation of local SOS - hotline for women and children

victims of domestic violence. In Rijeka, panel discussion was organised together with Women's Action Rijeka. Many young people took part in the discussion, as well as volunteers and residents from the house/shelter 'St. Ana Home' in Rijeka. They all emphasised the importance of education for men and women.

On November 25, together with SOS-hotline from Karlovac our member, a physician gave a lecture on the subject "Alcoholism and violence" representing a feminist approach. The guests were also a physician from local hospital and social workers from Social-welfare Office.

"The Contraception and Reproductive Rights" were held in Vojnić in our premises for members of local Women's Group Vojnić as well as for other inhabitants.

International Women's Day

In March 99 Cesi organised several activities for International Women's Day March 8th, for the second year in a row.

We have chosen that date to celebrate, but also to raise public awareness of women's issues. We have published leaflets, which we distributed on the streets of Zagreb together with other women who joined us. We emphasised the main fields in which are women's rights are endangered especially as they relate to some new laws (Family Law and Criminal Law).

CESI participated in several radio broadcasts in Zagreb, Karlovac, Rijeka and Okučani. We established good co-operation with Radio Student - Zagreb and agreed to continuously participate in Tuesday's evening programme, learning in the same time how to work on the radio. We are suggesting the themes and inviting the guests. So far, we have participated in four broadcasts whose themes were:

The presentation of CESI 's work, Women and Violence, Sexual Harassment at the University, Women and Politics. We have also announced activities for International day against violence against women and 16 days of activism. Activities are organised by various ngo's. We particularly emphasised women's group's activities.

On Radio Karlovac we announced panel discussion "Life without violence - It's Our Right" and talked about the issue and explained why we think it is important that the government provide refuges and shelters. We also announced our booklet about violence which has an address book of all counselling and SOS-hotlines; women's rights groups, lawyer's etc.

Publishing

The booklet entitled "No excuse for violence against women" was published in March. The distribution has been made in co-operation with other ngo's and we have established contacts with various groups all over Croatia as well as with social workers and teachers.

We made video documenting our organisation work in various areas.

Women to Women Project

Youth Advice Center Okučani

This project was aimed to empower women and youth providing them with necessary skills and therefore to increase their job opportunities and for active involvement in the community.

CESI as local, women's NGO established very good collaboration with the local government in Okučani. They offered the use of their premises. The local radio broadcast informed about our activities and our work in general.

The course of English language led by international volunteer, professor Kevin Warnes from Bradford University, England and peace activist and member of Green Party was additional activity which will increase chances for employment.

The

Project Vojnić

In collaboration with the Committee for Human Rights Karlovac, we began to work with women of Vojnić (former UN Sector North) to assess their needs and organise women's group in 1998.

Vojnić is a multi-ethnic community where relations between the different ethnic groups were deeply undermined during the war.

The women's group of Vojnić (ŽGV) has just registered and defined its mission and started its activities. They wanted to work as a group and try to realise their needs and solve problems in the local community. So, we conducted workshops on communication skills, organisational development and advocacy. We agreed about regular meetings to work further on their needs. Also, lectures on various issues are in the are currently going on under the main topic Women and Health.

Roma Women Project

After a few informal visits and introduction of our organisation to the community of Kozari Bok in July, we have begun with the strategic visits. Our aim was to find women who are interested to attend courses but also to identify possible Roma women leaders.

The characteristics of Roma community are high degree of illiteracy, low level of education, early marriages, high birth rate and mortality and high space mobility.

Roma family is strongly patriarchal and relation between parents is very determined. The parents are allowing a lot of freedom to their children but attention is drowning towards the education of sons. The main role of girls is to become a wife and mother.

Also, our work includes home visits and conversation with women on opportunities their daughters have today, including the comparison of their lives and discussion on possibilities and obstacles.

Another part of our project in Roma community in Zagreb was computer course for women and teenagers.

As a part of our educational program, following lectures were held on "Hygiene", "Women's Health, "Contagious Diseases and How to prevent them", "Basic Rights and How to achieve them"

We have established a contact with the teachers in the local community school.

They were also interested in organizing their own organisation. CESI have supported them providing information, liaison and necessary support for establishing activities for local community.

Recently, they registered the first Roma Women's organisation in Croatia entitled "Better Future". Our co-operation continued and CESI is further providing logistic and technical support as well as help in fund raising and organisational development.

Step into Tomorrow

It is conducted in co-operation with Anti-War Campaign Croatia. The goal is to support the right to return for displaced and refugee inhabitants of Croatia. CESI is contributing through it's work with women, fundraising, training for volunteers and supervision.

Humanitarian Aid

Humanitarian aid (wool, computers 7, hygienic supplies etc.) is collected with a women's group from Manchester, UK - Women's Aid for Peace, and distributed to the women's groups in Karlovac, Vojnić, Pakrac and Zagreb.

In order to reach our beneficiaries that are often living in remote areas we have bought a vehicle thanks to donation from Netherlands Embassy.

BENEFICIARIES:

The overall number of participants was 3000, mainly women and they have been involved in different activities. The members of support groups were young girls in the age of seventeen. The participants of training were women in the age of 18 - 50 and also some six men participated in the gender sensitivity. The participants on the round tables and panel discussion were man and women from 18 - 55.

Their professions varied from schoolgirls to teachers, professors, and nurses, psychologist, social workers, house-wives and some of whom were members of women's groups or local grassroots initiatives.

EVALUATION

In order to gather information on the succes of our activities we used questionnaires and verbal statements. Questionnaires were used for each activity to measure level of satisfaction and quality of performance. In this way we also got the information to what extent our program activity met the needs of the beneficiaries. Questionnaires were distributed and collected by our local assistant or by trainers. Tests were used during final examination by the course completion. Examination were done by our typewriting and computer course teachers. Those instruments were standard for this type of program.

CESI's ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CESI staff attended many training seminars and workshops, that enabled us to provide a wide range of service to the beneficiaries and to increase our skills. It improved our organizational stability. We have also attended international conferences in Romania, Georgia, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Croatia.

CESI's management team took part in several management trainings organised by organizations such as STAR Project, Center for Non-profit Management from

Slovenia etc. We have also participated in the conferences, training seminars and workshops.

FUTURE PLANS

Centre for Education and Counselling of Women is developing a project of empowering young women. This program is important in the psychological and social development of young women since it encourages their active participation in the adult world. It offers them the opportunity to express themselves, develop and expand their ideas and interests, as well as develop communication and leadership skills. Furthermore, it gives young women a chance to develop a sense of responsibility and to raise their self-esteem. Awareness raising workshops and gender sensitivity training will be conducted. Media campaign will be continued (lectures and panels, also).

We will continue to support women's initiatives and groups within local, mainly rural communities, to train the volunteers and activists to work with youth.

In 1999, we are going to develop a project on women's reproductive health and rights. This project will be realised in partnership with the Children's Hospital in Zagreb – University Medical School- Dept. of Reproductive Health, Women's Post - mastectomy Club in Split and also in co-operation with other women's groups and youth and students organisations.

OUR FUNDERS:

Past and present funders include:
the Open Society Institute, Peace Quest Sweden, the Royal Netherlands Embassy, International Rescue Committee – Umbrella Grant, UNDP, the Global Fund for Women, MamaCash, the Olof Palme International Centre, UNIFEM, DELPHI International - STAR Project, King Baudouin Foundation, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, British Embassy, USA Embassy, Croatian State Institute for the Protection of Family, Motherhood, and Youth, Pliva, Novonordisk and Krka.