

## EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES IN THE SERVICES IN SLOVAKIA

The “SUPPORT OF SHARING OF GOOD PRACTICE IN FIELD AND LOW-THRESHOLD CONTACT SERVICES IN SELECTED EU COUNTRIES” project included obtaining and sharing of good practices with our international partners. Our project’s partners included colleagues from Slovakia, specifically from the KASPIAN civic association and from the Intenda Foundation. With their support we have managed to contact fourteen experts from eight establishments that run field-work programmes or other form of low-threshold social work. We have obtained thirteen papers from them. Bellow, you can find four of them – in our opinion the most interesting ones.



# PRINCIPLES OF WORK WITH CHILDREN AND THEIR APPLICATION IN SPECIFIC SITUATIONS IN THE MIXKlub AND MIXÁČIK PROJECTS

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## Children's Fund of the Slovak Republic

Children's Fund of the Slovak Republic has been engaged in social projects in the district of Bratislava – Vrakuňa since 1998 (projects *Deti ulice* [Street Children], *Na rozhraní* [On the Edge] club for young unemployed people). The Pentagon project was conducted in the years 2000-2004 as a filed social work programme focused on the work with children and parents from socially and economically underprivileged and at the same time at-risk environment of Bratislava-Vrakuňa neighbourhood. The generally low offer of services for youth and children in this neighbourhood, as well as the achieved results, led us to establish the MIXklub drop-in centre in 2004.

## MIXklub Drop-In Centre – Services and Activities

MIXklub provides a range of services through contact work, social assistance and psycho-social support, which are combined with an offer of free time activities. We strive to improve the target group's quality of life by providing safe, accepting and supportive environment. We facilitate creation of valuable relationships, support the development of social and life skills in children and youth, while inciting their own creativity and imagination. We create conditions for meaningful and active free time activities and assist our clients in overcoming their problems.

MIXklub is frequented primarily by children and young people between 6 and 18 years of age from the 2nd District of Bratislava (Vrakuňa and Podunajské Biskupice neighbourhoods).

Since the MIXklub is located in a close proximity of the "Pentagon" apartment building, a former hostel, whose tenants often come from socially underprivileged environment, there is a strong presence of the community of drug-dealers, drug addicts and sex-workers. There are cases of families with all members, including the children, involved in criminal activities; many of "our" children come from such families.

The MIXklub is open year-round three times a week on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays between 3 and 6 PM. During its normal opening hours, the children may choose from a variety of activities: working with a computer, internet, painting, drawing, futsal, ping-pong, dancing, playing keyboard or guitar, par-

four games, book reading, sport activities – football at a grass field next to the MIXklub, badminton, volleyball, basketball, ice hockey, frisbee, skateboards, jumping rope and more.

Preventive counselling is provided during the normal opening hours of the club, when the clients themselves feel the need to discuss these issues. Prevention forms an indispensable part of our direct work with the children, the youth, as well as the parents, with whom we work mostly in the form of discussions. The main topics include romantic relationships and sex education, conflict resolution, substance abuse – tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, but also racism, xenophobia and education towards tolerance. Recently, we have opened a new position of preventive specialist, who will be in charge of preventive activities in MIXklub as well as MIXáčik. He will coordinate the preventive activities in cooperation with all our staff-members.

We intend to conduct targeted mapping of the need of prevention among our clients, open-up specific topics relevant to our clients and create various materials in cooperation with the clients. Moreover, [we intend to] seek our older clients who will directly participate in preventive activities targeted at the other clients.

At the beginning, the MIXklub used to offer [only] basic activities. Gradually, we were extending the offer of the activities, taking a step by step approach, learning from our own mistakes. In 2010, we created a space for an additional activity – creative workshop, which takes place four times a week (on Mondays, outside of the club's normal opening hours.) During this day, the children get an opportunity to engage in artistic and creative activities – pottery, potter's wheel, ceramic glazing, painting, drawing – but also may become acquainted with a still as well as digital video camera, shoot short videos, or edit photographs and videos. Apart from creating beautiful artistic and creative objects and developing their talents, the children get a chance to work in a small group for example on their patience or aggressiveness. The workshop also provides an environment for building-up of relationship both between the children and between the children and the staff members.

We have again returned to intense tutoring, which we had always recognised as crucial in the improvement of our clients' competencies. The tutoring consists of working out of home-works, as well as practicing the subjects, in which the children are behind based on their own judgment or the staff opinion. The tutoring involves both short-term and long-term support of the participating children. Drawing inspiration from the Uлита civic association, we have created a motivation programme consisting of motivation briefcases with school utensils; we also reward the participants with various experiences – e.g. a visit of an aqua-park, cinema, theatre, or a book-store voucher.

It is our ambition to create a triangle of cooperation between the school, the family, and the MIXklub. We envision the cooperation with the schools as active exchange of information pertaining to the child, its assignments, results and attendance.

During the first stage of our cooperation with the family, we would like to guide the parents towards more responsible attitude to education of their children (explaining the legal implications or advantages of education for the future life of their children.) In the next stage, we would like to get the parents involved in the tutoring process, instructing them on how to work with the child – e.g. while assisting him/her in the completion of homework.

We have started developing and implementing individual counselling service, which takes place regularly once a week and is targeted on those experiencing adverse social conditions, threatened by social exclusion, lacking the fundamental conditions for satisfaction of their basic needs, not using the available services, having a lack of relevant information and being in need of referral to a service or a different programme. Within the framework of individual counselling, we offer the following services to our clients: information service, basic social counselling, mediation of further and follow-up services, social assistance. The target group of our counselling programme consists of the clients over 15 years of age, mostly adults, who:

- used to be or currently are MIXklub or MIXáčik clients
- are close relatives (parents, siblings) of the MIXklub or MIXáčik clients
- are experiencing an adverse or crisis social situation
- are parents or persons taking care of the program's client and request assistance in the defence of his/her rights and legally protected interests or in solving educational and family issues.

We have started weekend stays in the nature for children up to 13 years of age and hikes for those above 13, that are aimed at providing the children with positive experiences, developing their life-skills, building their positive self esteem through acceptance and support, strengthening the availability of support from our staff members. The weekend stays in the nature involve group cooperation, discussions and contribution from each group member depending on his or her needs.

The children have to discover solutions of various tasks, making compromises, discussing the approach, accepting the rules of the game. They mobilize their physical and mental capacities, overcoming obstacles. Presence of others in the group, whose members mutually support each other, is also intensely experienced. The children discover the world of people as well as nature.

As a pilot project, we started a programme of film evenings for children over 13 years of age, which take place every fourth Thursday of a month. During these evenings, the children can watch presentation of photographs and videos from the life of MIXklub. The film evenings take place between 7 and 9 PM. We select films and documentaries on topics that our clients are interested in or that affect them. The film evenings provide an environment for conversations and discussions and, for the older clients, serve as an alternative to hanging out in the street or sitting in bars and slot-machine parlours.

The individual assistance programme was launched in 2010, when we supported our client – a talented girl who excelled in basketball but came from socially underprivileged background and lacked parental support. We mediated contact with a basketball club for her and during the first days accompanied her to the 4-stage training sessions. We were willing to cover the fees as well but the club waived them in the end. During the first month, we were monitoring her interest and motivation, which we boosted by purchasing a pair of basketball trainers she needed for the game. Today, the client continues attending the training sessions, as well as participating in matches where she scores points. We intend to continue in the individual assistance programme, supporting exceptionally talented children. In the future, we plan to support and accompany more children.

This year, we will be holding the seventh annual Bratislava Low-Threshold Cup. It consists of matches in football, futsal, ping-pong and dodgeball. The participants are children and youth from Bratislava low-threshold clubs. Through sport activities we strive to provide the children and youth with an opportunity for personal self-fulfilment, development of new friendships, as well as a chance to visit a different community. Common tournaments help to strengthen the feeling of belonging to a community, improving mutual relations and communication and diminishing aggressive behaviour in children and youth.

Since our inception, we have been organising week long summer day-camps. The day camp is intended for a group of 10 children accompanied by five members of staff. The programme lasts for five week-days, being open from 9AM to 6PM each day. A thematically focussed experience programme is prepared for each day of the camp – a short stay in the nature, educational/entertaining programme connected with a visit of a museum, a farm or historical monuments, a trip to swimming pool, various games and environmental games.

Every year, the MIXklub hosts MIXklub Children's Day, St. Nicholas Day, Valentine, Christmas Party, Carnival, mini sport tournaments (in football, pingpong, etc.), cultural events, competitions, visits of museums.

We continue working on sustaining an open, safe and at the same time stimulating and diverse environment for children and youth and on all of our goals because we know that it is a process one must keep working on and sustaining.

Our current situation and our point of departure can be defined as a well established drop-in centre based in a local community with a large group of permanent clients and continuous influx of new clients. We provide a diverse offer of free time activities, as well as an option of additional activities, such as the creative workshop, tutoring, film evenings, weekend stays in the nature, hikes, individual counselling – MIXCounselling and individual assistance.

## MIXáček Low-Threshold Family Centre – Services and Activities

Our work in the MIXklub has gradually led us to realization of the need to start building a low-threshold family centre for children under 6 years of age and their parents who wanted to attend the MIXklub and use our services. The MIXklub, however, lacked the space and personnel capacities that would allow us attending to their needs sufficiently.

In 2007, we therefore created a low-threshold family centre called MIXáček. MIXáček is intended for children under 6 years, who live in an environment with heightened criminality and for the parents who do not attend maternity centres or other pre-school facilities with their children. It has been open since November 2007, offering its services twice a week (on Tuesdays and Wednesdays between 3 and 6 PM). On Thursdays, outside of normal opening hours, we offer a pre-school preparatory programme for five and six year olds.

Operation of MIXáček an MIXklub led us to realize that the first years of a child's life are crucial for the formation of his/her personality. Parents are the most important people in a child's life and cannot be separated from the context of social networks. If a change is to appear in the clients' situation, it must appear also in the situation of their parents and older relatives – often former clients themselves.

We continue working on sustaining an open, safe and at the same time stimulating and diverse environment for children and youth and on all of our goals because we know that it is a process one must keep working on and sustaining.

Our current situation and our point of departure can be defined as a well established drop-in centre based in a local community with a large group of permanent clients and continuous influx of new clients.

Prior to opening of MIXáček we used to work in MIXklub with girls who became mothers prior to or immediately or after reaching the age of majority. In most cases, the pregnancy was unplanned and the girls' partners were not always willing to take care of the child, leaving the girls alone with the baby (cases like this continue happening even today.) We are also in touch with mothers of several children who have long-term problems with proper care for their children. These children later become clients of MIXklub.

In 2007, a maternity centre was opened in Vrakuňa. Nonetheless, it is targeted at mothers from an "upper" social group. It charges high membership fees and our clients cannot afford to attend to it, apart from feeling their otherness in such environment. Since there is no other facility that would provide assistance to young mothers and fathers from at-risk environment in Vrakuňa, we have decided to create a low-threshold centre for them and for children under six years of age. At the beginning, our main focus and goal consisted of providing a strong support for parents who have problems in taking care of their children, come from underprivileged social environment but are still interested in their children. They either face a short term adversary situation (an unplanned pregnancy, problems with upbringing, etc.) or some long-term problem (drug addiction, unemployment...). We wanted to teach them to better cope with challenging situations, assisting them in upbringing and managing their children. For the children we have prepared a didactic programme aimed at the development of life skills.

Gradually, we have been realizing that establishing cooperation is much more difficult in the case of the parents who had been originally in the centre of our attention than in the case of their small children. One of the rules in the early stages of the programme was that no child could come to MIXáček without being attended by a parent or a relative – e.g. a sibling over 10 years of age.

Nonetheless, very soon many small children started attending the club without a chaperon and could not understand why they were not allowed inside; they perceived the club as their environment but could not persuade their mum, dad, brother or sister to come there with them. We have hence changed the rule so that children under three years of age may come inside only with a chaperon, while children over 3 years of age may come unaccompanied. The children thus moved to the centre of our attention while the parents/relatives moved to a back-burner. In spite of that, we did not want to give up the work with the family as the primary unit that determines the development of a person's life and which we therefore want to approach as a single unit.

We experienced difficulties communicating with the parents who perceived MIXáček as a place where

they can deposit their child and have a rest instead of spending their time with it. On the one hand, we had understanding for exhausted mothers, for whom this was one of the few opportunities to get some rest or make some chores, on the other hand we wanted them to understand we are here also for them.

Today, after almost two years of existence, MIXáček is open regularly twice a week (on Tuesdays and Wednesdays) between 3 and 6 PM. There is always at least one staff member present, although usually there are two of them and some times three (the best case scenario). Using play activities, we develop the children's motor, linguistic and communication skills, since in most cases they display underdeveloped fine motor skills, poor vocabulary, cannot recognize basic colours, animals, do not have basic hygienic habits and have narrowly limited social skills (being aggressive and rude towards other people).

Once a week (on Thursdays) between 3 and 5 PM a pre-school preparatory programme for five and six year olds is held in MIXáček under supervision of two dedicated workers. There are two 45 minute long sessions and a fifteen minute break, during which the children can have a snack. For the first 15 minutes, the children together with the staff members engage in the initial rituals – they wash their hands and faces, talk about how they feel today, can play a short game. The purpose is to tune the children up for further work. The entire day's programme is devoted to a single topic (e.g. animals, seasons, family). The topic is reflected in a fairy-tale or a story, to which the children listen and then try to discuss. Then they have the break with a snack. During the second class, they work with work-sheets or learn some art technique, which is again related to the day's topic. A summary and relaxation activity follows. The methods of work vary based on the children's attention and their momentary needs. In 2010, we worked with 50 clients under 6 years of age and 28 parents/adult relatives. We have to underline that the number of our clients keeps growing. The above numbers do not include the older siblings who sometimes accompany the smaller children; these are included in the MIXklub statistics.

We have created a so called "transition period" for six year olds, who may attend both MIXklub and MIXáček. After the children reach their seventh year of age, we prepare for them a farewell to MIXáček party. We are becoming more and more aware of the importance of rituals that help to overcome chaos, creating a sense of order in the events. The rituals help the children to understand and accept various changes.

The children and their parents/relatives get an opportunity to use MIXáček premisses, which are divided into three areas – a play-room with a number of didactic games and toys, a working room with chairs and desks where the children can paint, draw, create and learn, and a sitting room that serves mostly to the parents, who may rest their or receive counselling from our staff members. The children and the parents may come and leave at any time during the opening hours. They do not have to engage in any activities and may just use our safe environment. MIXáček is currently still a "smaller and weaker sibling" of the MIXklub, but we will keep working on making it an "equal partner," adding further activities to respond to our clients' needs. As of September, we are planning to extend the regular opening hours of MIXáček from two to three days a week. We also intend to start a tradition of weekend stays for mothers with children under six years of age.

The weekend stays for children and one parent or other significant adult should provide an opportunity to work on the improvement of parental skills and strengthening of the relationship between the parents and the children. The weekend stays are intended for a group of 5 parents and 5-8 children (some of the parents have 2 children), who will be accompanied by 2 MIXáček employees (a psychologists and a social worker) for the entire weekend; on Saturday, there will be a programme prepared by 2 drama-therapists. The two staff members will be also responsible for the organisation of the entire event – from the preparations, selecting the date and the lecturers, addressing the parents and selecting five of them, through securing room and board, travel to and from the event, and accompanying the participants throughout the entire weekend including all the activities, as well as assisting with the care for the children and lecturers. The main day, when group and individual drama-therapeutical activities will be held, will be the Saturday. The programme will also include community meetings.

In a long term perspective, we want to sustain our safe and stimulating environment. We want to continue providing services for the children and their parents on continuous basis, at times when they know they can find us in MIXáček.

## Principles of Work with the Children

The authors of the present paper have encountered the principles of work with the children in a similar fashion as all the staff members of MIXklub and MIXáčik. Initially, they were not aware of their importance. Only the actual direct work with the children made them realize the importance of refreshing and internalizing these principles.

The principles of work with the children form a part of internal guidelines of the Children's Fund of the Slovak Republic. They were created by Ms. Michaela Šopová based on her long-term collaboration with Ms. Martina Derková in a programme for children with hyperactivity, attention and behaviour disorders, and years of work in a low-threshold programme for children and youth Pentagon and MIXklub in Bratislava.

Michaela Šopová is the founder of the Children's Fund social project, which she coordinated for many years. Only later the principles became a part of compulsory training of the staff members, which also includes guidelines, ethical code, etc.

The principles of our work with the children and youth are based on the worker's internal attitudes. After working with children for many years and encountering various problems, we have come to realize that no technique, no programme we may create, can serve as the primary vehicle of a change or development in children. The change and development is brought most importantly by the quality of the currently experienced relationship between us and the children. To ensure that this relationship is, from our point of view, as good and pure as it can be, we have to experience these attitudes deeply in our own being.

Many times, we have been asked how to react in this or that situation in the work with children in the hope that there exists some sort of ideal manual or approach. In reality, however, it seems that the better we internalize these principles, the easier we discover the "correct" reactions and solutions of various problems we encounter in our work.

### 1. We Love the Child as It Is.

This principle of love is in essence a decision. We may decide to love a specific child (provided he/she is obedient, wants to play or talk with us, but also when he/she is spitting on us, calling us names, is arrogant and cheeky) and we can in fact love him/her in any situation. It is a very liberating feeling. From the child's perspective, the experience of being really loved as it is, has major psychological as well as physical effects.

Many of the drop-in centre clients have repeated experience of rejection, non-acceptance, humiliation. First of all, they do not experience the feeling of unconditional (i.e. boundless) parental love at home. Furthermore, this approach is usually confirmed by the social environment outside of their own family. More often, they tend to choose such ways of approaching other people that are unacceptable and difficult to comprehend (they want to play with other children, so they beat them, they want to be noticed in a group, so they call other children names.) The environment keeps confirming to them that they are bad and ill-behaved children, fighters, liars, thieves... The child internalizes this opinion of him/her-self and – in spite of a great desire to be accepted and loved – further interactions with new people confirm it.

Many clients of the drop-in centre can spend infinite efforts on making us hate them.

Assistance in correcting the distorted self-image is one of the longest paths in the work with children and young people in a drop-in centre (or any other environment).

To be able to start working with a drop-in centre client, it is necessary to make this extremely important decision – to love the child; at the same time this is the least exhausting way of being with him/her.

### 2. Acceptance

We accept any kind of child's behaviour even if we disagree with it. This does not mean we would not tell the child directly what we don't like. Nonetheless, in the given moment we accept that whatever the child is doing, is the best he/she knows, or the only way he/she can express his/her feelings and in this spirit we communicate with him/her.

We provide the child with a feedback on his/her behaviour, but most importantly we try to get "connected"

with him/her, with his/her current needs and feelings. Trying to understand the child's momentary feelings (e.g. when he/she is affected, is in a bad mood...) means trying to get closer to him/her. This helps to create an environment, in which the child can better understand his/her feelings (which he/herself sometimes cannot identify and describe) and motives of his/her behaviour and make decisions.

At the same time, we may communicate to the child our own feelings or needs (e.g. when it comes to observing the rules of the club.) This enables the child to change his/her behaviour not because of us but based on his/her own decision.

### 3. Freedom of Choice

Freedom of choice in any situation means that we are free to decide for any specific consequences of our choice. We always have the freedom of choice, although we are not always aware of it. Freedom of choice includes acceptance of a specific situation, in which we are making our decision, whether it is positive or negative. In a drop-in centre this on the practical level means for the client that we direct him/her towards an active approach to the solution of everyday situations and thus create conditions for the acceptance of responsibility for oneself and towards one's environment.

### 4. Being Oneself

This means accepting oneself, feeling internally free. At the same time it means that my behaviour is in harmony with my internal experience, i.e. that I make free and deliberate decisions on how my experience will be reflected in my behaviour. It is usually the fears and anxieties that we carry within us that prevent us being ourselves in a given moment. Therefore it is important to work on the next item.

### 5. Being Constantly in Touch with Oneself

I understand myself, what is going on in me at this moment. It is important to come to terms with one's past, one's own traumas, to understand the causes of one's behaviour. Get to know oneself. We constantly work on bringing the least possible amount of our own unresolved problems into the relationship with the client.

If we let our own hidden pains and fears come to light, we will tend to react disproportionately to the child in conflictual situations (e.g. we defend the child who is repeatedly harmed by other children by speaking for him/her, projecting our own feelings of pain and depriving the child of the competencies he/she could use to protect and defend him/her self.)

### 6. Trusting our Feelings and Intuition

We often intuitively feel what is and what is not ok but we don't dare to rely on our intuition. However, the feelings are often a more reliable compass than logical thinking. Intuition can sometimes reveal a completely new perspective of a child, matters, events around us that we could not reach through any analysis. If, in some situation and in spite of good and logical arguments, our internal warning light "flashes" - indicating the opposite of our logical arguments – we should ask ourselves, how would such new information change the specific situation.

### 7. Taking Care of Oneself – Psycho-Hygiene

We take care to fulfil our needs. We try to discover a psycho-hygienic method that suits us. If our own needs are fulfilled, we can take care of the needs of others more effectively. Supervision, which is indispensable for the improvement of our work, belongs to this category.

If being with the children makes me exhausted, I have to find out why, what am I doing wrong.

### 8. Not Expecting a Change; the Child Sets the Pace

We should not expect that the child will change. If we expect it, we feel disappointed every time he/she

fails. This does not mean we should not be setting targets. Nonetheless, we should be aware that meeting of these targets is our need, rather than the child's need.

We create the conditions for the child's development. That is where our responsibility lies but also ends.

The child sets the pace of its own development. We provide him/her with as much time as he/she needs. During the time we work with him/her, no change may occur.

### 9. Not Expecting Rewards from the Child

We should not expect that the child would give us back love, respect, gratitude.... What we give to him/her is based on our decision. We are not making bargains!

By not expecting anything from the child, we make him/her free to make his/her own decisions. We know that we have given him/her the best we could, that on our side, we have created the best possible conditions for his/her personal development, but the child has to experience many things personally. No long term relationship based on dependence is healthy.

### 10. Faith in the Tendency of Each Individual and Child towards Self-Expression

We believe that a child is born as a good person and that he/she has a tendency towards positive development. We believe that the child will fulfil this potential if we create ideal conditions for him/her.

### 11. The Process is Important.

We try to experience the moment here and now in the best possible way. We do not adhere strictly to some rules, we do not have a definite idea of how our clients should behave, what changes they will make, how should each meeting in a club of field look like. During the process, the child demonstrates who he/she is and how fast he/she wants to keep proceeding, whether he/she is capable to start learning and teaching us.

The change we desire may take many forms and, realistically speaking, in drop-in centre conditions, we may never see the results of our work. What matters is that we have an opportunity to accompany the child in certain time and space.

### 12. The Child is my Teacher.

Working with the child can among other matters enable me to deconstruct certain ideas any myths about matters and situations, about what is and what is not correct. The child experiences the reality in his/her own world, which may be different from our own experience of the same reality.

This makes us reflect about matters and values, which so often seem so clear and unambiguous.<sup>1</sup>

Ivana Pitkova, working mostly in the framework of supervision sessions together with a team of collaborators and under the direction of our longstanding supervisor Naděžda Faketeova from the Institute of Virginia Satire, has developed the principles of work to be used in the solution of specific situations arising in the work with children under 6 years, but also older, as well as their parents. These situations keep reoccurring; we strive to internalize their possible solutions, teach them to our new workers. At our common meetings we revise them if the existing solutions are no longer satisfying or add new ones.

1/ Summary of the principles of work with children:

1. The social worker loves the child as he/she is.
2. The social worker accepts any kind of behaviour and experience of the child.
3. The social worker is aware of the child's freedom of choice.
4. The social worker is him/her-self.
5. The social worker is constantly in touch with him/her-self.
6. The social worker trusts his/her feelings and intuition.
7. The social worker takes care of him/her-self – psycho-hygiene.
8. The social worker is not expecting a change from the child.
9. The social worker does not expect rewards from the child.
10. The social worker trusts in the tendency of each individual and child towards self-expression.
11. The social worker is with the client here and now; what matters is the process.
12. The social worker is aware that the child is his/her teacher.

### 1. When the children argue, shout at each other, fight (making the workers desperate of them:)

"I like you very much, if it helps you to calm down, you can swear at me."

"You can swear at me, I can take it. I know that you are not telling it to me, that you like me."

The problem is not that children swear but that they are in pain.

### 2. When the children repeatedly steal toys from us, trying to take them away (and the workers start losing their patience).

"You would like to show the toys also to other children? You can bring them here and show them to them ... they can come with you."

"Would you like to have the toys with you all the time?"

"You can close your eyes, caress them, feel them .... you can as if take them with you ... but only in your heart, not physically."

"The toys tell me they want to stay here, they live here."

"The toys say: ,I love Simonka when she is playing with me here in MIXáčik. I will wait here and look forward to when you come."

### 3. The parents are careless or aggressive towards their children, they tell us they do not want them any more (and it gives the workers heartache.)

We try to connect them with their positive resources.

"I have known you for many years. What helps you managing it, having a child, taking care of it?"

"You have dressed him this morning ... so you do care about him."

"I am sure that you do care about your child, that you love it."

"How do you call him nicely?"

"I bet you will make it."

She can freak out, stop...

Alternative: "Knowing you, I can tell you really care about the child."

"You have decided to keep the child. You didn't have to have it."

"Are you sad because you are alone?"

"Every woman would be sad because of it; she would feel sorry about it..."

"You would really like if someone wanted you, if someone showed love to you."

"I believe your son would also like if you showed him how much you love him!"

"Look in his eyes, you can see how much he loves you, he really needs you now."

"You have been sad, did you cry?"

Talking to the little one while touching his face.

### 4. If some children overwhelm or irritate us (and we still want to love them and be fair to them).

People who cry and take up the space are crying for help.

After a certain, usually short, period of time, the workers start reacting irritatedly to such child, the contact is very exhausting and burdensome, they feel powerless and overwhelmed by the child.

The child can feel the worker's powerlessness. On the surface, the child can feel the worker's anger; but he/she can also feel the worker's deeper feeling – such as powerlessness.

Recommendation: Being truthful: "I am listening to you know. I cannot listen to you know."

The supervisor recommends to the workers to cut off for a minute, whether by glancing away or in their thoughts; nonetheless, the worker should inform the client about it.

### 5. When the children mock the weaker ones, "different ones," engage in bullying (and we don't understand them, since it is great that each of us is different.)

We talk about the rules “we behave politely to each other, each one of us is unique, we mention various signs that differentiate us from others, e.g. such as ,someone talks worse, someone cannot pronounce r-s, someone comes dirty more often, someone has red hair, someone brown, someone blond, someone is fatter, someone thinner, someone has blue eyes, others brown or green...”

“We will not allow you mocking her, offending her.... I trust you that you can be polite and nice towards S., not call her names, that you can change yourself.”

“What do you need to stop being vulgar, hurting others, calling them names, mocking them?”

“I believe that you can change, it does not have to be immediately, but I will be waiting for you, we will be waiting for you.”

#### **6. When the children physically touch us (and we want to teach them expressing and accepting love, as well as the fact that they themselves can make the decisions about their bodies and touching.)**

#### **7. When the children hug us**

“I will let you hug me.”

“You can hug me.” (The point is getting into the children's subconsciousness that we make decisions about our body so that they too learn this.)

“People want to have good relationships.” “I would like that we have a good relationship.”

“By hugging people express good relationships to each other. I too like hugging people I have good relationship with.”

“Do you think we could express them also differently?” “How could we express them?”

“Can I touch you?” “Can I hold your hand?” “Can I hug you?”

“Will you let me do it?”

“You can say no, I won't be angry. I will like you anyway.” (The children learn that they can decide about what they want.)

#### **Final recommendations on solving specific situations with children:**

- Do not use the word “mistake” – people do the best they can.
- Appreciation, support, positive formulations.
- Being consequential and serving as a model.
- Most important are the relationship and the feeling of safety; the programme is less important.
- Acceptance and boundaries.
- Most important is being “here.”

When Barbora Brichtová reread the principles of work with children for a hundredth time, she realized that they are useful especially in dealing with the clients' violence and aggression. As a person from a normal society, she finds violence unacceptable.

MIXklub and MIXáčik and especially their individual clients have been, and still are, going through various stages of violent behaviour against the equipment of the centres, other clients, as well as its staff. We have encountered a number of cases of violent behaviour when the client would walk through the centre hitting anyone who got in his way, destroying the equipment, offending others, assaulting the staff. We have also seen cruel fights between small boys who were just five years old.

When faced with such situations, we felt strong anger towards the client(-s), sometimes even fear.

It is very difficult to become aware and make the decision to love such child as he/she is. Nonetheless, it has been very liberating for us. One has to always think about where the child may be coming from, what has he/she experienced that day, what is he/she bringing into the centre. It does not justify his/her behaviour but it brings us closer to the client, enabling us to comprehend why he/she is acting this way. One has to realize that each child and each one of us desire that someone loves us, which always helps us a lot. Yes,

we do judge the child's behaviour, but we don't forget to add that we are here for him/her. This is related to acceptance, as another principle. If the client behaves aggressively, we accept his/her behaviour even if we do not agree with it. We often explain to people around us, to the new staff members, or to people who have not been to our drop-in centre, how sensitive our children are, that they can feel everything.

That is why acceptance of their behaviour and tuning onto their current mood and feelings is so important. That does not prevent us from expressing our mood and feelings.

Because our children are especially sensitive, they can understand us better if our behaviour corresponds to our feelings and we are ourselves. Getting to know oneself also through supervision, as one of the tools of psycho-hygiene, helps us to cope with and understand our reactions and feelings we experience in contact with the client and aggressive behaviour. During the supervisions, we deal with various examples of violent behaviour of our clients, which helps us understand the client as well as ourselves.

When we get to know and trust our feelings, we can think even in such tensed situations, trusting our feelings and decisions to act in this or that way.

We have encountered a number of clients, whose violent behaviour was diminishing only slowly, or not at all. The principles that state that the pace is set by the child and that the process is important, help us not to expect unrealisable goals and changes that the client could not meet due to his/her possibilities and resources. Becoming liberated from our idea of the client's change helps us perceive the steps that the client is capable of making. In case of violent clients, such steps may consist e.g. in leaving the centre without further violence, apologizing, accepting the responsibility for one's behaviour by accepting a penalty, etc. We know that for many clients who behave aggressively, we are often the only and last place that still accepts them (they are reprovved at school, they receive punishments, at home they often receive physical punishments for violence, they are not very popular among their peers because others are afraid of them...). Because of this it is important that the clients can feel that we are with them here and now.

Without the faith that the child is born good and that one only has to create conditions for him/her, we could not do our work. It helps us to perceive the clients who hurt others, children or staff members, in a different light.

Clients with aggressive behaviour have taught us a lot about ourselves but also about our environment. It is often impossible to think about all possible explanations of why a person behaves in a particular way; but when we devote more time to him/her, do not judge him/her, reflect about his/her behaviour and accept him/her, it becomes easier to better understand his/her behaviour/reactions and get closer to him/her. It is our children who have taught us this.

#### **Recommended resources**

Internal materials of the Children's Fund of the Slovak Republic



## **SEX BUSINESS AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING** **(PRIMARY PREVENTION PROGRAMME FOCUSED ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING,** **INFORMATION SERVICE FOR KOTELNA LOW-THRESHOLD CLUB EMPLOYEES)**

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The STORM association was established on the initiative of social work students from Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra on May 15, 2002, when it was registered by the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic.

The STORM civic association is the only institution accredited by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic that operates in two regions, three districts and three towns. It contributes to the fight against drugs in the fields of both secondary prevention (KROK VPRED [A STEAP AHEAD] project focussed on social field work with active drug users and sex workers in the towns of Nitra, Sered and Trnava, which is based on low-threshold approach and harm-reduction principles), as well as primary substance-abuse prevention in the town of Nitra (CIRKUS low-threshold club for children and youth and STEREO primary substance abuse prevention project). In cooperation with other organisations, the association also organises one-off events (e.g. candle march on World HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, requested lectures primarily on the topic of addiction).

Apart from secondary and primary substance abuse prevention, the STORM association focusses also on sex-business and human trafficking areas. The clients of all of its projects (KROK VPRED, CIRKUS low-threshold club for children and youth, STEREO) share common characteristics (e.g. motivation).

It occurred to me that integration of information and experiences from the above mentioned areas of our association's activity may be of practical use (primary prevention programme creation, information and experience mediation) for KOTELNA low-threshold club. I have been working in STORM Association for over three years. I have worked in all three programmes. Currently, I focus primarily on social field-work with intravenous drug users and sex workers, as well on the STEREO project, which is focussed on primary substance abuse prevention based on interactive group work at primary and secondary schools.

The conducted survey that forms a part of this paper was focussed on sex-business and human trafficking. The survey was prepared for low-threshold programme workers in Slovakia. We have addressed all organisations that are active or passive members of the Association of Low-Threshold Programmes for Children and Youth in the Slovak Republic. The survey was aimed at discovering whether any organisation conducts prevention activities in this field and in what form, eventually how would they envision such activities.

## Background

The following paragraphs theoretically define the concepts used in this paper based on our practical experience.

### *Prostitution = sex-business*

While it is possible to encounter the term “prostitution” in expert literature, due to its negative connotations we prefer to use the term “sex-business.” In practice we use both terms especially because of expert publications.

Prostitution is perceived as a business exchange between the customer and the vendor (László, Emmrová, 2006). Its structure consists of three parties (a prostitute, a customer, a pimp) and their mutual relations (Kolenčík, 2000.) As we know from our experience, some sex-workers do not have pimps; in practice we encounter both models. Sex-workers can be categorised based on various aspects – most frequently based on their gender. In the KROK VPRED project we work with women. Currently (February, 2011), there are no male sex-workers registered in the programme. The female sex-workers' customers are mostly anonymous. Mansson (In Kolenčík, 2000) divides the prostitution clients, based on various studies, according to motivation for procuring sexual services into men who

- have sexual problems in their partnership life
- are insufficiently loved, shy, single
- are seeking curiosities (our practice confirms that pregnant sex-workers are popular among the clients).

Pimp (procurer) arranges contact with the customers and at the same time incites or forces the sex workers to engage in prostitution, providing so called protection (Laszlo, Emmerová, 2006). Pimp can be a sex-club owner, pimp selected by the woman (frequently it is a close person), or a female trafficker (In Kolenčík, 2000).

### *Causes of Prostitution*

Legardiner (In Kolenčík, 2000) has defined two groups of causes. Personal causes according to her include emotional deprivation (violence in family, feelings of rejection, abandonment, childhood injustices, need of revenge), sexual abuse, drugs, encounter with the initiator. Global causes according to her include mentality, cultural milieu, money, the North-South gap and underdevelopment, economic and political crisis (Eastern countries).

Chmelík (2003) distinguishes five basic types of prostitution based on the environment where it is conducted: private, hotel, apartment, bar, and so called street (road, highway) – based prostitution.

## KROK VPRED Project Clients

Most of our clients are engaged in the last of these types (street, road, highway – based prostitution.) Their average age is 29 years, they are Slovak, they live with friends mostly in rented apartments, eventually in garden huts. During their free time they often associate with drug users (Internal Materials, STORM Association, 2011).

Out of over 350 registered clients in the town of Sereď, there are 82 women, out of which almost 96% are street sex-workers. Among the female clients, there are mostly intravenous drug users. Currently (February 2011) an average of 8 female clients contact us during our [daily] service hours, 2 of which are intravenous drug users. For the clients who work in sex-business, we provide:

- needle exchange services
- distribution of syringes and material needed for safe intravenous application of drugs (alcohol swabs, injection water, dry swabs, filters, ascorbic acid, tourniquet), condoms, facial tissues, lubricants, informational and educational materials
- food service (tea, water, individually wrapped biscuits)
- counselling (social, legal, health care)
- contact work
- information services
- social assistance (chaperoning during visits to the authorities, hospitals and other institutions)
- (non-invasive) treatments

Our clients use all the services, although the social service is the least popular one. The clients are capable of arranging an appointment (agreeing on exact time, place and specifying their requirement), however they often do not arrive to the appointment with the social worker.

Hot tea or water have proved to be excellent contact tools. Many clients experience periods of homelessness or do not have anyone who would talk with them without prejudices, abuse and contempt (disagreements on the street, possible rivalry).

We provide counselling with social, legal and health related issues. The most frequent topics concern social security, recovering or paying of child support, debt executions, inheritance, STDs and other issues. When we are incapable of providing adequate counselling or other information services to our clients, we consult our external collaborators and provide adequate information during our next encounter with the client. On a specified day each month, the field-workers are accompanied by the external collaborators (a lawyer and a nurse). We also distribute various leaflets among our clients. The leaflets reflect the clients' needs containing e.g. information on police powers, risks related to intravenous use of drugs during pregnancy, possibilities of treatment, etc. We also distribute leaflets provided by cooperating organisations.

Relatively frequently the clients make use of our offer of non-invasive treatment, for which we use a special SUV that provides environment for anonymous and safe treatment, as well as STD and hepatitis A and B testing (screening tests).

## Human Trafficking

Human Trafficking is a serious form of criminality that encroaches upon human rights; it may be even connected with organised international crime.

Slovak legislation (Penal Code No. 300/2005 Coll., Art. 179) stipulates that a human trafficker – defined as someone, who using fraud, deceit, restriction of personal freedom, violence, threats of violence or serious harm or other forms of coercion, accepting or offering money or other benefits to achieve the consent of a person upon whom another person is dependent, or misusing their position or abusing the vulnerability, entices, transports, harbors, hands over to or takes over from someone else, another person, even with her consent, for the purpose of prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation including pornography, forced labor or forced services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, removal of organs, tissues or cells or other forms of exploitation – shall be punished by imprisonment for four years to ten years. Czech legal definition of human trafficking is similar, while specifying a different prison term (2-10 years).

The victims of human trafficking in the Slovak Republic are especially young women trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour. Typically they come from areas with high levels of unemployment, socially disadvantaged families (Criminality Prevention Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic, 2007). Substantial percentage of Slovak women subject to international trafficking are of Roma origin, coming from segregated communities. They are living in poverty, have never been

employed and their chances of success at labour market are negligible. These conditions drive the Roman women into prostitution (Jurásková, 2005). Slovakia is a source and transit country, only rarely it becomes a target country. The main target countries for Slovak victims of human trafficking are the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Italy and the United Kingdom.

Victims in transit come mostly from the Ukraine, Moldova, Belorussia, Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, India. In Slovakia, one also encounters so called domestic human trafficking, whereas the most frequent destinations are Košice, Bratislava, Humenné, Lučenec, Komárno and Kežmarok. The typically used means of transportation differ depending on whether the victim is being transported by the perpetrator (car), or traveling alone (bus, train, airplane) (Situácia [Situation], 2011).

### *Causes of Trafficking*

IOM (International Organization for Migration) has defined three causes: economic (attractive earnings, employment, opportunity to travel), social (dysfunctional family environment, occurrence of domestic violence or sexual abuse, low level of education and awareness of this problem in the area) and criminal (persisting demand for sexual services and cheap labour) (Baráth et al., 2006).

### *Mechanics of Human Trafficking*

Human trafficking is shaped by the principal features of market: supply and demand. The victims may have different reasons for leaving their country of origin. Nonetheless, these can be typically described as a combination of "push" (disadvantageous socio-economic conditions, unemployment, domestic political instability, armed conflict, etc.) and "pull" (better financial situation, etc.) factors. The victim's decision is effected by correct timing and quality of the offer. In reality, the victims often have no idea what conditions really await them in the target countries. The mechanics consist of the following components:

### *Recruitment*

In Slovak conditions, it consists most frequently of an offer of attractive work abroad (model, barmaid, dancer, waitress, au-pair). The offer may come from an unknown person as well as a familiar person (friend, fiancé) or from classified advertisements (personal ads, those offering marriage with a foreigner). There is no typical perpetrator.

### *Transit*

In Slovakia, the most usual forms are automobile and air transportation. The victims of trafficking arrive via official border-crossing points as they agree to leave their country voluntarily and only in the destination country discover that the purpose of the journey is different than ways agreed. Transit coordination is most likely organised abroad nonetheless we must point out that human trafficking may occur within one country whereas the victim does not cross the borders (domestic trafficking).

### *Harbouring and Receiving*

After the transit and arrival, the victims are harboured in various hideouts. The hideouts are guarded so that the victims cannot escape.

### *Coercion*

The victims frequently have their documents taken away, which makes them more vulnerable. Threats, violence, and drugs are used to force them to do the work for which they were sold. As their situation is frequently not legal (they do not have valid working permit, visa, etc.) they can be easily blackmailed or threatened. They do not receive any pay for their work or they receive only minimal amount of money, as they have to pay off the "debt" for arranging the work, living expenses, etc. to the traffickers. Victims of human trafficking are not necessarily subject to all of the above described forms of pressure. Physical violence does not have to be used.

### *Abuse*

If a person is forced to work and the originally agreed-upon conditions are seriously breached, most frequently, it is a case of human trafficking.

### *Liberation*

There is no typical scenario. The victim may manage to escape during an unguarded moment, thanks to a police raid or with a third person's assistance. Liberation and subsequent adaptation using expert support (under ideal conditions a multidisciplinary team) is in our opinion likewise important (IOM, 2008).

During the existence of KROK VPRED Project we encountered only one case of human trafficking. The task of field workers is to identify the victim, address her, provide her with assistance and subsequently, if the client wishes so, refer her to further assistance. The cooperating organisation is civic association Náruč that works with human trafficking victims. The client rejected our offer, nonetheless she still stays in touch with us, using our services relatively frequently.

## **Survey Results**

A survey was mentioned at the beginning of this paper. The individual items were prepared in such a way, so as to reflect the described fields, focussing on our ability to create a primary prevention programme in the area of human trafficking. After processing the results, we have discovered that none of the addressed organisations was engaged in a regular prevention programme with such focus. Rather, they perform "client requested lectures" [on this topic] when the clients express their interest. Our own organisation likewise does not offer a regular [specialized] prevention programme in this field; rather, it is incorporated into prevention programmes offered in the CIRKUS club and at primary and secondary schools.

The workers who have filled in the questionnaire described the interconnection of topics as well as the drug field, defined who should be in charge of this topic (field programmes, organisations working with children and youth, school prevention specialists, police, NGOs). The preferred forms of work include group work, providing of information during activities, eventually individual counselling.

Our association conducts prevention using similar methods. In the following paragraphs we will outline a method that could be used to conduct prevention programme in this field in KOTELNA club. The club is aimed at a target group of 14-26 year olds.

The programme is planned as 90 minutes long, covering chiefly human trafficking with focus on sex-business. It has been prepared based on experiences with the activities in the area of group work drawing from expert literature (freely available at <http://www.aagw.org/Education>, [http://www.clovekvtisni.sk/upload/File/Pracovne\\_listy\\_screen\\_5%5B1%5D.pdf](http://www.clovekvtisni.sk/upload/File/Pracovne_listy_screen_5%5B1%5D.pdf))

The Programme may be modified as needed. Other activities may be found e.g. in expert literature.

## **Structure of the Prevention Meeting**

So far, KOTELNA club has not encountered the topics of sex-business and human trafficking (neither the workers nor the clients have any experience.) The workers deemed it useful to obtain some information about these topics and pass it to their clients. Since many clients leave their town during the summer vacations and since they come from socially disadvantaged environment, they may actually be at risk.

Since our association has made good experience with group work in the field of prevention (projects CIRKUS and STEREO), we have decided to prepare a prevention programme for KOTELNA club clients. The programme is scheduled to last for 90 minutes. Active (an activity similar to the introductory one) or passive break in the middle of the programme depends on the clients' attention. In our opinion, the crucial

components of the programme are clearly formulated instructions, summaries, feedback, as well as clarification of any unclear points.

*Activity:* Sitting without Chairs (2 minutes)

*Goal:* to relax the atmosphere in the group to create an atmosphere of confidence

*Aids:* None

The presence of at least 10 clients is advisable.

*Procedure:* The clients are standing in a circle one immediately behind another. Upon a signal, they all sit down so that each one is sitting on the knees of the player who is behind him/her. Everybody must be seated comfortably. Then they start walking together, moving first their left and then their right leg, until the entire circle is walking.

*Activity:* Quiz (45 minutes) – working with myths and facts

*Goal:* understanding the threat, mechanisms and consequences of human trafficking while debunking the myths related to these issues. The lecturers will discover the clients' real state of knowledge about these issues.

*Aids:* writing tools, paper, sheets with printed statements

*Procedure:* The lecturers read aloud the statements from a prepared sheet of paper. The lecturers provide the clients with enough time to note their agreement/disagreement on a piece of paper. The lecturers may add additional statements to the sheet. At the end of the session, a discussion is held about the client's attitude towards individual statements.

#### *Worksheet*

Statement 1: People who get drawn to human trafficking can escape easily.

Statement 2: The trafficked persons know very well what are they getting into.

Statement 3: The trafficked persons are immoral because they become prostitutes.

Statement 4: The trafficked persons deserve assistance.

Statement 5: The trafficked persons are stupid because they have struck a deal with a pimp.

Statement 6: People become trafficked because they need money and do not have any other opportunity of getting it.

Statement 7: The trafficked persons have sealed their fate and it is impossible to do anything for them. The Government would be just wasting money if it wanted to help them.

Statement 8: If someone I like told me how much he/she loves me and promised me a good job abroad, I would certainly believe him/her.

Statement 9: The trafficked persons are innocent. The criminals are guilty of crime.

Statement 10: I could not become a trafficked person.

*Activity:* Story (40 minutes)

*Goal:* To acquire additional knowledge about human trafficking and form an opinion on the trafficked persons. It is possible to point out the mechanics of trafficking, handling information in a practical way.

*Aids:* writing instruments, flip-charts, the story.

*Procedure:* The lecturers first read out Jana's story and then instruct the clients to put themselves into Jana's shoes. The lecturers ask why Jana started prostituting herself and did not return home. We let the clients think about other possible reasons why a trafficked person cannot or does not want to return home. The lecturers write the reasons down on the flip-chart. They refer to the mechanics of trafficking and subsequently define preventive measures together with the clients.

#### *The Story*

Her name is Jana, she is 18 years old. She has a mother, a stepfather, a younger sister and two ste-

pbrothers. She comes from a small village in Northern Moravia. Her father died when she was little and her mother remarried. Her stepfather is jobless, drinks a lot and when he is drunk, he beats the mother, Jana and her siblings. When she was 16, her girlfriend's brother introduced her to his cousin, Boris, who was 21 years old and was from a different village. Boris and Jana started seeing each other. Boris used to tell her that he loves her. He would take her out for dinners in restaurants, for movies and one day he bought her a chain with a heart. She keeps wearing it up to this day. Several days later, Boris brought her flowers and proposed to her. It was the happiest day of her life. When she wanted to share her joy with her parents, he told her they should not tell other people about their relationship. He told her he would like to leave with her on the next day to Italy where he has relatives. They would help him find a good job and Jana would not have to work at all. He was promising her a beautiful life together. He obtained and arranged everything important (documents, passports, insurance) and on the next day they departed. He ordered her to tell her Mum she was going for a visit to her girlfriend and she did so. They arrived to Italy next day early in the morning and her life changed forever. He locked her up in a hotel room and told her she would never get out from there. That was the last time she saw him.

Around 4:30 AM three men arrived and started beating Jana. All three of them then raped her. Their boss, Laco, told her Boris had sold her and that from now on she belonged to him. She had to do whatever he told her, otherwise they would kill her. This lasted for about a week, during which she ate just one meal a day. When Laco told Jana for the first time she would be a prostitute, she refused. However, he continued treating her badly (the beating was getting ever more brutal, she was getting ever less food.) Then they sold her to another trafficker who treated her even worse. Once he beat her up so badly, she lost vision in one eye for two days. He told her that since he had paid for her she would have to work until he gets his money back. His name was Andreas. He blackmailed her by telling her he knew the whereabouts of her family so if she did not do as she was told, he would rape her sister and kill her mother. Jana was alone all the time and was very scared. She was not scared for her life anymore but for her family. Another girl showed her the ropes and she started prostituting herself. Sometimes she managed to beg some soap and toothpaste from her clients. She wanted to run away, but she knew very well that Andreas controlled all the streets in the neighbourhood where she worked. He even had contacts with the police. Three weeks later, Jana got arrested and sent back to the Czech Republic. Only then she finally realized what had happened. Boris was not a cousin of her friend's brother. He had lied to her and deceived her. Sometimes she even cursed herself for what had happen. She is still getting sick whenever she recalls her ordeal.

#### *Preventive measures*

a) Prior to the departure:

- always check up the agency or individual who has arranged the job for you
- keep a copy of your documents (ID, passport) at a place known only to you
- memorize your SSN, ID or passport numbers
- if you know what country you are going to, find out the address and possibly the telephone number of your country's embassy
- make an agreement with someone you can trust back home (preferably he/she should not have anything to do with the arranging of the job) about a password/passphrase that would indicate you are in danger so he/she could try to arrange help
- stay in regular touch with people back home, inform them about any change of address.

b) In the destination country:

- under no circumstances give your documents (ID, passport) to anyone except for the border police
  - if someone takes your documents away, contact the police and your country's embassy immediately
  - if you are working and the job conditions do not meet the guaranteed standards, contact the agency or the individual who had arranged the job (if it is possible)
- during your stay do not accept any gifts or loans so that you are not indebted to anyone.

## Recommended Resources

Anti-Trafficking Educational Curriculum [online]. 2011, [Accessed on: 2011-02-14]. Accessible at: <http://www.aagw.org/Education/index.html>

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## PRE-SCHOOL PREPARATORY PROGRAMME OF KOPČANY COMMUNITY CENTRE

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### Short Introduction of the Organisation

The Kopčany Community Centre programme was launched in December 2003 under the umbrella of Odysseus civic association. In January 2008, after four years of operation, the programme became independent, having been transferred to a newly established civic association Ulita [Shell]. This however, did not involve any changes in the programme staff, activities, or vision. The mission of Ulita civic association consists of improving the quality of life of children and youth from urban communities. It offers free-time and counselling services and prevention activities administered by an expert team of educators, psychologists and social-workers. The main programme consists of social field work conducted twice a week directly at the housing estate. The project also includes structured activities targeted at specific groups. Regular activities offered throughout the year include: tutoring for elementary school pupils and group activities for 10-13, 13-16, and 16-19 year olds. The groups are divided according to the age as well as their intended goal. Once a week, we provide space for teenagers and parents who may use the counselling services or access the Internet. Apart from the regular activities, we also organise special events, such as the summer “drum-fest,” BBQ, excursions and competitions for children, athletic activities and competitions, and so on. The Ulita activities rely on multiple-source financing, consisting mostly of municipal government subsidies, as well as grants provided by various foundations. In 2010, the income included also 2% from the taxes. Private donors participate in financing only indirectly, via various foundations.

### Description – Good Practice Topics

The preschool preparatory programme has been since its very inception conceived as the Community Centre’s response to the needs of children and parents from the Kopčany housing estate. The primary target group consists of the children who are about to start attending school in September, children with delayed start of school attendance, as well as pupils of the first forms. Our survey has revealed that children do not attend kindergartens and [consequently] have problems at school from the very first forms. The environment we have created does not substitute kindergarten, elementary school or family. We assist parents who often lack time, parenting competencies or knowledge, to improve the pre-school education of their children and enable them to progress. Within the framework of our project, we have

created a safe and peaceful environment that enables children to prepare for school. During the year, we work with them for two days a week during afternoon hours and during the summer vacations, we run an intensive pre-school preparatory programme. The pre-school preparation is conducted on individual bases, which makes it possible to react to the child's needs, systematically addressing the gap between the required and actual capacities of the child at the beginning of school attendance.

## Description of the Solution

We have managed to create a safe and stimulating environment for the children where they can learn new things, master self-care skills and develop fine motor skills under the guidance of specially trained Ulita employees. This activity is very popular among the children because, as they themselves state, we let them experience the feelings of success and recognition. We thus improve learning capacities of pre-school children and at the same time help the children acquire the knowledge and skills required by school.

During the year, children have an opportunity to attend the club for ninety minute long sessions, during which they can work with the educators using prepared working sheets, or play with educational materials. This space was originally created for children who already attend school. Nonetheless, our surveys have revealed that [local] children do not attend kindergarten and do not receive enough stimuli at home.

The structure of the pre-school preparatory programme changes during the summer vacations. It is open for several hours each day. Before the start of the programme, we contact the parents and provide them with leaflets describing the programme as well as forms used to express consent with their children's participation in the programme. Very often, this is the only contact we have with the parents. Nonetheless, every day we provide the children with working sheets they can fill in with the parents to review what they have learned.

While the structure of the pre-school preparatory programme remains the same every year, its contents changes depending on the participating children. The programme lasts for two weeks during which the children attend it for several hours each weekday. The participation is voluntary, which makes it impossible to estimate the number of children in advance. The programme must be therefore prepared in such a way, that it can work with one child just as well as seven children. According to our experience, it is best if each educator works with a maximum of two children. Therefore, there are two to four educators present during the meetings depending on the number of children.

In a playful way, the children learn about the following topics: the human body, clothing, plants and animals, travel – traffic signs, fruits and vegetables, health and hygiene, habits, shopping, professions – jobs, weather, time and clocks, geometric figures. Children learn about these topics through games, songs, stories, as well as their own experience.

Since the preparatory programme lasts for several hours a day, the children eat together. They have a light snack, which they themselves help to prepare and which also helps them to master hygienic habits and table manners. We regard the common meal as an important ritual of our meetings but also of social life. The children are sometimes hungry already when they arrive; therefore the educators have always some bread-rolls or fruit ready for them.

At the end of the week, we make various excursions. Last summer, we visited Zoo and Children's Museum. On the way to the destination children become familiar with public transit and road rules. During these excursions, we emphasize suitable clothing and food for children.

At the end of the pre-school preparatory programme, children receive a diploma and a set of school supplies (notebooks, writing instruments, etc.) They also get everything they have created or prepared in the programme so that they can show to their parents how much work they have done.

## Evaluation and Recommendations

We believe that the main benefit of the project consists of increasing [children's] motivation to learn new things and engage in school-related activities. We consider the building of a positive attitude to learning and school as the main benefit because, together with the child's abilities, it impacts the academic results and hence the future life of the child. In our society, formal education serves as a lift that allows the child to gain a better job. We introduce effective ways of learning and coping with work-load to the children and young adults in order to help them cope with the school demands independently. Together with them we search for possibilities and resources they may use in their studies. We provide them with an opportunity to experience success, strengthening their self-esteem, which often plays a crucial role in their further development. Our work with children confirms the need to prepare the children for school. Although Ulita already helps pre-school children twice a week and runs the intensive summer programme, we believe it is still not enough. Therefore we are planning to broaden this activity in the future. We are thinking about establishing a so called mini-kindergarten or some alternative. Nonetheless, this will require long-term negotiations with the municipal government, as well as looking for strategic partners.

This year we are planning to publish a book on pre-school preparation of children from under-stimulating environment that could help inspire other establishments that work with children. It will include not just theory but also practical tips and exercises. We believe that it is important that other centres also work with pre-school children.

If you are interested, you can find further information about our organisation and its activities at our website: [www.ulita.eu.sk](http://www.ulita.eu.sk).



## RELATIONSHIP AS BASIC MOTIVATION TOOL IN STREET-WORK

Mgr. Jozef Vycpálek

Podané ruce, o. s.

### Social Field-Work with Homeless People in Bratislava

The social field work activities targeted at homeless people in Bratislava were launched in conjunction with the creation of a tent village, which was created in 2005 through mutual cooperation of Proti prúdu [Against the Current] civic association, Ministry of Interior and Civil Defence of the Slovak Republic. In December 2007, Proti prúdu launched a regular field-work programme which ran for five days a week. The Streetwork programme and the first expert team were created.

A year later, Streetwork started specializing in low-threshold activities oriented at covering the basic needs and lowering the risks related to life in the street. Since at that time there was not (and even today there still is not) any other field programme devoted to the work with homeless people, it was necessary to create a foundation stone and a link connecting all available services and to contact as many potential clients as possible. Streetwork hence focusses on people who are, in the words of program coordinator Petr Kadlečík (2009, p. 1), “hungry, thirsty, dirty, without hygienic habits” and who lack potentially useful information. As Kadlečík further states:

“Many of them are addicted to alcohol, they have limited mental capacity and impaired social relations. Some of them suffer from psychiatric disorders. They are either solitaires or their social life is limited exclusively to the homeless subculture.” (Kadlečík, 2009, p. 1)

The target group hence consists of people who are intoxicated, immobile, need to see a physician, are in a life-threatening condition or have been living in the street only for a short period of time, do not have access to food or shower, do not know how to arrange documents.

Streetwork offers a broad range of services to its clients, including transport to a shelter or to a doctor, basic information service and social counselling, social assistance with dealing with authorities, providing food, clothes or treatment or arraigning services of cooperating health-care and legal services. The social field workers simultaneously conduct active field monitoring, searching for potential clients; we welcome any assistance from members of the public who may reach us via telephone.

Currently, Streetwork provides its services for 6 days a week between 5PM and 10PM. During the years 2008 – 2009 it had recorded 7 831 contacts, distributed 5 851 portions of food and 2 240 pieces of clothing, provided 298 crisis interventions and social advices, 88 transports and 348 treatments and managed to refer two clients to alcoholism treatment programme (2008 and 2009 Annual Reports.)

## Working with an “Unmotivated” Individual in the Street

Štefánia Köverová (2008, p. 30) and Nina Beňová (2008) describe homeless people as emotionally deeply wounded individuals with a low level of self-confidence and will to overcome obstacles, whose “sub-sistence related problems (concerning housing, work, income, hunger, etc.) are related to intense existential problems (feelings of alienation, guilt, anxiety, loss of the meaning of life, etc.)” Marta Misíková (2008) states that most individuals become homeless as a result of a personal disaster or even a combination of several such simultaneous disasters.

There is therefore a very high probability that during a filed service one encounters a person who does not have enough food and sleep, probably has no sex life, is not healthy, does not have any friendly contacts with other people and is socially isolated. It is possible that such a person is so much deprived that he/she lacks any conviction and interest to meet these needs, that he/she is really convinced that this is the end of his/her life journey and that he/she only has to await the death; he/she has resigned to any endeavour for change, does not feel capable of it. The passive attitude and behaviour in such situation may however have serious and lasting consequences.

When a two-member team of field-workers concludes that a contacted person is not using a range of other services offered and remains passive, is not interested in receiving advice or treatment declaring lack of interest in changing his/her situation or state of health, they designate such a person an “unmotivated client.”

Miron Zelina (2004, p. 76) defines motivation as “arousing, sustaining and focussing of human energy, activity,” whereas the motivations differ with respect to their force, intensity and kind, i.e. “what a person wants or prefers.” Motivation may hence be [conceived as] a state but, as Martin Větrovec (2009) points out, it is not a permanent feature of an individual, it can be changed, induced or boosted.

Generally speaking, psychology describes motivation structures in a hierarchical fashion. Basic motivations are based on basic needs: eating, sleeping, breathing, having sex, being healthy, and so on. These are followed by needs and motivations that may be fulfilled only through interaction with one’s environment: loving and being loved, being with people, getting recognition, appreciation, being in society, feeling safe and secure.<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes a homeless person gets to a point when for some reason his/her behaviour is not leading towards fulfilling of his/her basic needs. He/she does not miss the dirty bed in a homeless shelter on the edge of town and does not care about the rotten foot. On the one hand, being settled in a certain mode of being he/she desires to remain in it, on the other hand, as Fromm has observed:

“Desiring something harmful is the the essence of disease. Every neurosis thus confirms the fact that pleasure may contradict man’s real needs.” (Fromm, 1967, p. 142)

In practice we encounter situations when an almost immobile clients feels better in a sewer from which he cannot get out than in a shelter, when a drunk, soiled and beaten client feels better on a bench or pavement in the centre of town during a cold night than in a shelter, when a wheel-chair bound client feels better lying in shit under a staircase with a bottle in hand but without secondary withdrawal seizures. In such cases it is clear that the ultimate consequences of person’s behaviour are harmful to his/her health and life threatening.

“A person may really recognise and love. Nonetheless when he is threatened – not just physically but in his entire essence – by overwhelming violence, he becomes defenceless and fearful; even his spirit is affected, its functions become disrupted and paralysed.” (Fromm, 1967, p. 193).

The homeless person’s dire condition is emphasized by the fact that he/she is or is becoming, a subject of stigmatization and exclusion. Outlaws, vagabonds, lepers and idlers dependent on begging have always been delinquent. “For the Christian people, they represent the others, people on the edge of a heard” (Eco, 2004, p. 216), their otherness is external and threatening to “our” universal world.

When a person is labeled “homeless,” he or she is drawn into a “practice of rejection, exile and confinement; they let him get lost in a mass unworthy of differentiation” (Foucault, 2000b, p. 199).

A homeless person partakes in certain specific discursive relations, in a specific construct formed by social practices. Technically speaking, there is hence no such thing as an “unmotivated client”; rather there is a client motivated to something else than what the service offers because “a person in exile is not getting crushed but rather decays” (Saint-Exupéry, 2008, p 80).

## Motivating towards Cooperation

A filed-worker is like Socrates, asking his or her client: Do you take care of yourself? A depressed and from the point of view of “internal motivation” resigned individual is frequently addressed by (under ideal conditions) motivated field-worker offering to stimulate his/her body and soul by various services. As Erich Fromm asks:

“How can we know whether a random event, such as an encounter with a good and loving being, will not influence the development of a person’s character in a certain way? (Fromm, 1967, p. 183)

The first contact is hence of crucial importance: trying to break the ice with a help of coffee or tea in a thermos, bread, crackers or soda, and first testing of interest in the form of a few proposals. If the client is resisting, it is possible to try repeating the contacts using a different team, looking for a sympathetic face to whom the client will react. If he/she reacts, we get to a moment that Rom Harré and Frant R. Gillet (2001) would describe as clarifying of the referential ambiguities, as it is necessary to achieve “harmonisation” of the conventionalities of thought of the field-worker and the homeless person because the helping hand may not be perceived by its object as a helping one.

Repeated contact is the basic precondition for building of the relationship. At the beginning of the relationship, various short-term contracts are being concluded focussing on what the client wants here and now: today it may be coffee and a sweater, a month later he/she may require a referral to a more complex service. The relationship serves to stimulate the client in his/her living and being, focussing on the basic needs. It also provides an opportunity to encounter him/her during a real crisis even after he/she had not required anything for a long time. The continuity of contacts provides an opportunity for a dialogue. In its course, what has been blocked and ossified starts changing and moving, the forgotten truths are becoming recalled, and the client encounters again and again the question of his/her own engagement. During this process of building up of the relationship towards the service, the field workers as well, as him/her self, the client gets an opportunity to learn how to think differently, to overcome weaknesses of his/her will, to enter into a different discursive context in which he/she may structure his/her activities differently.

The relationship is a process of creating and strengthening of subjectivity. It enables dialogue, reflection and gradual contemplation of oneself, since “to create means to put the other in a position from which he can see the world as we wish, rather than offering a new world to him.” (Saint-Exupéry, 2008, p. 197) The process is similar to, although not identical with, the stoic tradition of asceticism, as it is understood by Michel Foucault (2000a, p. 203). “The goal of its practice is not a preparation for a different reality, but an attitude towards reality of this world.” It means that the field-worker may remind the client that two days ago he/she was walking and today he/she can just sit helplessly, that he/she can openly express concern for the client’s being in the given situation, that he/she can tell to or remind the client that I am here for you and I can do this for you if you want to. He/she is not trying to saturate with knowledge but rather, as Antoine de Saint-Exupéry might put it (2008, p. 79), is forging a style of a new grasp of matters because “he who struggles with himself will get the furthest and be the most successful.” There is an important space for support and planning of the assistance as well as short-term interventions, the efficiency and effectivity of which is discussed by Peter Anderson, Antoni Gual and Joan Colom (2007). In the relationship, the foundations of future being are being laid down. As Foucault has put it:

“Suffering is not real evil. Everything possible, everything that endures, every disaster can be reduced

<sup>1/ Karl Marx (2004, p. 61) claims that „people may not become liberated until they are capable of obtaining food and drink, housing and clothing in sufficient quality and quantity.“</sup>

so that only that what we have to accept remains. The reduction consists of accepting the future together with the present.” (Foucault, 2000a, p. 204)

## Risks of Manipulation

The process of clarifying referential ambiguities between the service and its addressee is riddled with a number of problems and dilemmas. If even an advanced case of gangrene of a limb does not make the client to seek medical assistance, he/she is oscillating between attempts for survival and death.

It may be very difficult for the social worker to come to terms with such facts when the client rejects the offered care. It may happen that a homeless person who has already experienced a great deal of professional attention can no longer see any potential for change or reaches the limits of the service potential.

Instead of that, he/she may desire peace and tranquillity, rejecting the sound an ambulance siren, waiting at the emergency room, hurried hospital staff, IVs, amputation, ECG, homeless shelter. There may be thousands of field-workers taking care of his/her drinking problems, social situation, the state of his/her limbs, mobility but not a single person may care about him/her as a human being. It sounds as a cliché, but it is true that, as Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1993) points out, one can care about a person only after his life was saved.

The desire to help and forge a stronger contact may transform into insecurity and ultimately into pressure – e.g. when a person with a psychiatric diagnosis accepts a sleeping bag, a sweater or coffee from the field-workers one day, and the next day runs away from them... Potentially helpful relationship based on the principle that less is more may transform into a cycle of arguing and persuading in which one can breath out only after two years long effort for an involuntary confinement at a psychiatric ward.

A sick or otherwise threatened client may arise such anxiety that turns the service into being mechanical and technician instead of human and accessible. If the direction and speed of the client's progress do not match the field-workers expectations, if he/she rejects the services because he/she is under the impression that he/she may not decide about them, the field workers may have a tendency to resign upon further attempts, as the client's attitude e.g. awakes fears of their own failures, shortcomings and limitations. To put it otherwise, an “unmotivated client” may influence the motivation of the social worker to work with him/her, which obviously provides an important supervision topic.

Such development can be prevented by measures taken at various levels. Within their team, the field-workers should mutually clarify their expectation and the limits that might impact the work with such demanding clients that were described above. This must be made clear already at the time of recruitment and initial training. There should also be standard procedures for cases of a strong emotional reaction to a contact with an “unmotivated client” who is harming his/her health. It is quite normal that people are not prepared for a situation when they discover that their client has died or is doing everything to die. It is certainly an advantage that the field-workers encounter the clients always as a pair; after the contact they can discuss their own reaction, their emotional as well as intellectual responses, reflect upon their attitude towards the client. Preferably, they should also share such reflections with their colleagues during a meeting or supervision session.

Well organised, adjusted and safe sharing will enable the social workers to better understand their impressions and reactions. It will also clear up space for settling issues within the professional relationships preventing them from being transposed into personal life and creating conditions for further personal and professional growth of social workers, as well as improvement of the services. In the words of Saint-Exupéry (2008, p. 365): “If we want to see, it is not enough to look.”

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