

OVERVIEW OF NATO PROGRAMME SECURITY THROUGH SCIENCE

ADVANCED RESEARCH WORKSHOPS

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION AND PIECE IN BALKANS

NATO Advanced Research Workshops organized in the region of Former Yugoslavia

2003 – 2011

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1. Introduction

Since 2003 the group of professionals developing psychosocial programs for children and families in the region of Former Yugoslavia has been organizing ARWs aimed to facilitate and support peace building, strengthening stability and contributing to the social reconstruction of the region torn by inter-ethnic conflicts. The four organized ARWs were community oriented, matching practitioners with scholars, politicians, donors and other players in the field. They dealt with psychosocial issues in a comprehensive way, linking the individual to community approach, psychosocial issue with human/children rights, individual recovery with social reconstruction of communities, focusing on security and other defined priorities of the **NATO Programme Security through Science**.

The ARWs were focused on former Yugoslavia and North Caucasus, the regions in which the applicant co-directors (Anica Mikuš Kos, Dean Ajduković, and Emir Kuljuh) have been running psychosocial programs. Therefore the core of participants was representatives of Western Balkan countries and from North Caucasus (Chechnya, Ingushetia and North Ossetia- Alania).

International experts and researchers in the treated domains were invited for the theoretical presentations.

The ARWs provided a solid platform for developing new ideas and reflections, exchange of experience and mutual support. The knowledge and analysis of eminent scholars participating as speakers in the ARW enriched the vision of field workers. On the other side, scholars were confronted with the reality of the field work and feasibility of putting into practice some theoretical issues. However, ARWs were first of all **committed to practical, visible projects with tangible output.**

Due to the continuity of ARWs, a sustainable net-work has been developed which facilitated the field activities and resulted in cross border and interethnic programs uniting the sides being in conflict and contributing to the normalization of relationship and stability.

In the run of time, the ARWs, organized by the core group of co-directors, became an expected traditional encounter providing a platform of international dialogue, establishing new regional, interregional and international links and cooperation, generating new cognition, know-how, creation of new incentives, and energizing field workers for their present and forthcoming activities. The group of co-directors considers that NATO ARWs **linking science to society, contributed** to the development of incentives for psychosocial programmes, to efforts invested in their realization and to their quality and impacts.

Directors and co-directors since 2003:

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Executive Director, National Centre for Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
Department of Psychiatry, Dartmouth Medical School
(ARW – 2003)

Anica Mikus Kos, M.D.
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Slovene Philanthropy
Former programme director of the Foundation Together
Present president of the Slovene Philanthropy
(All ARWs – 2003 - 2009)

Emir Kuljuh, M.D.
Psychiatrist
Director of the OMEGA - Health Care Center Graz
(ARW 2008, 2009)

Ajdukovic Dean, PhD,
Professor at the University of Zagreb, Croatia:
Department of Psychology
(ARW 2003, 2007, 2008, 2009)

NATO Advanced Research Workshops organized in the period 2003 - 2009 by the listed co-directors:

- Promoting the Psychosocial Well Being of Children Following War and Terrorism (Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2003);
- Evaluation of Community-based Psychosocial Programs in Areas Affected by Armed Conflicts and Terrorism (Lipica, Slovenia, 2007);
- Activating Local Resources for Psychosocial Recovery of Individuals and Communities in Territories Affected by War and Terrorism (Prishtina, Kosovo, 2008);
- Returnees and the Social Reconstruction of Communities Affected by Armed Conflicts (Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2009).

Publications of the reported ARWs

Promoting the Psychosocial Well Being of Children Following War and Terrorism. Ed.: Friedman J.M. and Mikuš Kos A., NATO Security through Science Series, E: Human and Social Dynamics – Vol.4, IOS Press, 2005. (190 pages)

Intervention Journal of Mental Health, Psychosocial Work and Counseling in Areas of Armed Conflict. Special issue: Evaluation of community based psychosocial programmes. Volume 5 – Number 1, March 2008. (96 pages)

Activating Psychosocial Resources in Territories Affected by War and Terrorism. Ed. by E. Baloch Kaloianov and A. Mikuš Kos. NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme. E: Human and Social Dynamics – Vol. 57, IOS Press, 2009. (169 pages)

Papers presented at the ARWs and published in different journals.

2. Overview of ARWs organized on territories of former Yugoslavia (2003 – 2009)

In the following text a brief overview of realized ARWs is presented. Instead of composing a systemic presentation of performed workshops, I chose from each ARW a different component in order to illustrate the philosophy and impact of reported ARWs.

2.1. The Importance of Psychosocial Wellbeing of Children in the Post-war Period for Social Reconstruction and Stability of Terrorist and War Affected Regions (Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2003)

NATO-country Co-director

Matthew J. Friedman, MD, PhD

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The range of topics covered theoretical perspectives, practical examples, clinical issues and scientific questions concerning community-based psychosocial interventions for children. It appeared that the major issues addressed fit into three major domains: Intervention; Education/Influence; and Program Evaluation/Research. Participants endorsed an initiative that will put theory into practice.

Through formal presentations and open discussion, conference participants considered the importance of policies and interventions that promote the psychosocial well being of children exposed to war or mass terrorism. This was addressed from several perspectives including individual children, their families and their communities. The major focus was on community based interventions that link individual mental health/ psychosocial well being with the health and stability of the community.

The most important methodological question was: the best way to evaluate community based interventions. Such an evaluation must address both qualitative and quantitative issues with scientific rigor in order to generate a valid empirical assessment of community based intervention. Such assessments must also have sufficient scope to address the many complexities, contexts and interacting processes that are involved in community-based interventions. It was stated that there are important ethical issues that must be taken into consideration when providing community interventions or when conducting an evaluation of such programmes. The participants agreed that rigorous evaluation is needed to provide optimal guidance to decision makers so that they can make policies that are based on the best evidence. It is also needed by donors, and scientific community.

All conference participants endorsed a proposal to develop a state-of-the-art evaluation methodology which would be field tested in a specific community

based psychosocial intervention for children in Kosovo. A school-based community intervention for children in Kosovo will be rigorously evaluated by a methodological approach that will be designed by conference participants. Dr. Matthew J. Friedman kindly offered to chair the working group. The findings from this initiative should serve as basis for the future development of psychosocial intervention for children and for a methodological approach for testing the impact of such interventions.

Comment: Among other products (links, joint projects, book published in NATO Programme Security through Science, presented models of good practice, etc), the first ARW identified the burning problem of evaluation of community based psychosocial programs. The recommendation to organize a ARW on this issue was realized in 2007.

The idea of running a rigorous evaluation process in Kosovo was not realized. It was expected that the momentum generated by this NATO conference will sponsor the aforementioned Kosovo school-intervention project but not enough efforts were invested in achieving the realization of the incentive. A recommendation would be to put more efforts in the realization of some core incentives generated in the frame of ARWs.

The reported ARW generated cross - border links and cooperation. For instance, a network of school based voluntary work of children and youth has been developed. The regional program in North Caucasus is still functioning (financed by National Endowment for Democracy). The regional program for Western Balkans is since 2008 financed by US Embassies in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. There have been many other community based psychosocial programs connected with the reported ARW.

An important product of the ARW was the publication "Promoting the Psychosocial Well Being of Children Following War and Terrorism". Ed.: Friedman J.M. and Mikuš Kos A., NATO Security through Science Series, E: Human and Social Dynamics – Vol.4, IOS Press, 2005. (190 pages)

2.2. Evaluation of Community-based Psychosocial Programs in Areas Affected by Armed Conflicts and Terrorism (Lipica, Slovenia, 2007)

The objectives of the WRA were to identify and clarify concepts, strategies and indicators that will help field workers to monitor the process and evaluate the impact of the psychosocial interventions. The analysis and recommendation served researchers and scholars and helped donors and decision makers to assess the feasibility and the expected impact of community-based programs that can prevent long lasting negative consequences in huge number of children and families exposed to conflict and terrorism and in turn contribute to stability in the regions.

Recommendations on evaluating community-based psychosocial programmes (Richard Williams, Anica Mikuš Kos, Dean Ajduković, Guus van der Veer & Melody Feldman)

The workshop considered methods for evaluation and concluded that a carefully constructed and phased mix of qualitative and quantitative methods is likely to be required. Qualitative enquiries are important in identifying the questions to be asked in the quantitative phases of any evaluation and in coming closer to the meaning of any findings, while the latter are important in identifying the size of any impact and the confidence that might be placed on the conclusions.

Definitions and Terminology

1. It is vitally important that actions are taken to develop, agree, disseminate and use common definitions of the terms that are in frequent use in the field of designing, delivering and evaluating psychosocial programmes for people of all ages in areas that are affected by war and terrorism.
2. There is a particular requirement to agree internationally a definition of 'evaluation' as applied to psychosocial programmes for intervening to assist populations that are vulnerable or at risk after war or terrorism.
3. Terminology should be agreed by, and be accessible to all stakeholders concerned (i.e. funders and donors and all staff who work to design, deliver and evaluate intervention programmes).
4. The definition of evaluation should differentiate actions taken to 'monitor' from those actions taken to 'evaluate' intervention programmes

Human Rights and Effective Evaluation

5. Well designed and conducted evaluations should be based on and promote awareness of human rights.
6. Well designed and conducted evaluations should:
 - a. promote people's access to services of their choice that are in compliance, with their rights and meet their needs as they see them;
 - b. be sensitive as to whether or not psychosocial programmes and their staff respect and promote human rights;
 - c. be compliant with human rights in their design and execution.
7. Evaluations must be sensitive to human rights. This means that they:
 - a. must not be separate from the work or services that are required by vulnerable populations at risk; and
 - b. must assist governments and the responsible authorities to recognize their obligations to human rights and, in particular, to the needs and requirements of people of all ages including children and young people.

8. Principle and experience show that it is especially important that evaluators should understand that there are huge benefits to be gained from directly involving the people who are the intended beneficiaries of the services that are to be evaluated in designing and conducting the evaluations. This is especially important when children and young people are involved. This means that:

a. It is important to ensure that every evaluation is meaningful to the people who are involved as well as for the people who deliver the intervention programmes;

b. evaluation processes should emphasize the importance of taking active steps to hear programme users' voices;

c. evaluators should be aware of the important gains that are to be had from listening to the language that people use to describe and comment on the programmes in which they are involved; and

evaluators should match the contents of their evaluation protocols and the methods that they use with the needs of the vulnerable people and their capacity to engage, participate and benefit.

Gaining the Advantages of Effective Evaluation

9. Evaluation includes identifying what is going well or has gone well and what has not gone well in a programme as well as lessons for the future that can be drawn from the project that has been evaluated and other projects.

10. Evaluation should be considered as an integral part of the process of developing expertise in the specific areas covered by each project.

11. Well designed and conducted evaluations should:

a. clarify the intentions, design, and effective conduct and delivery of specific programmes;

b. be beneficial to the communities served by the programmes that are being evaluated;

c. promote reflective practice by the staff of programmes;

d. reinforce fidelity of programme delivery with what is required by the populations involved and the intentions of the programmes' designers (this is especially important for large, complex and demanding multi-focal or multi-impact programmes that are delivered in changing, challenging or risky circumstances);

12. The experiences gained by all who are involved in conducting evaluations and their findings should be used to develop curricula for training relevant people in the skills of designing, conducting and interpreting the findings of evaluations in the psychosocial sector and adapting them to local situations. Training of this kind should be available to all stakeholders.

13. Well designed and conducted evaluations should enable donors and funders to better to understand the importance of staff knowledge and expertise in the programmes that they are supporting.

Promoting Positive Outcomes from Evaluation

14. Evaluations should be designed to augment the capabilities of all staff who design, deliver or evaluate intervention programmes and enable them to better perceive the relevance for their work and the need for effective evaluation. This means that there is a requirement to make the case for evaluation each time that it is conducted in such a way that the case:

- a. promotes better understanding of why and how evaluation is appropriate;
- b. provides explanations that respond to the real concerns of the staff who design and deliver intervention programmes;
- c. explains the rationale and anticipated outcomes from evaluation; and
- d. makes each evaluation relevant to the real circumstances and, thereby, 'user friendly'.

15. All evaluations should:

- a. be aware and respectful of the emotional meaning of each evaluation for the people involved as implementers, beneficiaries and evaluators;
- b. be aware and respectful of the potential emotional resistance of the people who are responsible for implementing psychosocial programmes, especially those who are working in difficult circumstances, as well as the potential responses of the beneficiaries;
- c. be synergic and compatible with the mores and intentions of the programmes that they are established to review;
- d. be developed and conducted in harmony with the programmes that they review;
- e. be aware of the diversity, cultural backgrounds and expectations of the stakeholders;
- f. be conducted according to overt, transparent, acceptable and agreed ethical standards;
- g. empower the staff, including fieldworkers, who are working to deliver intervention programmes;
- h. value and put into perspective the internal reviews that staff conduct within their programmes;
- i. connect with the staff and fieldworkers at appropriate emotional and cognitive levels in ways that empower them and acknowledge their expertise and the burdens that they carry;
- j. be participatory and encourage all relevant stakeholders to be involved;
- k. be capable of rolling with the changes (including governmental, programme and staff changes) that occur, necessarily, during the life-times of intervention programmes;
- l. not change programmes to meet the needs and/or prejudices of the evaluators (though it is recognized that one of the core intentions of evaluation is that it should recommend constructive, reasoned and reasonable changes, if required);
- m. adopt processes that are capable of recognizing unexpected (or collateral) benefits and harms that may come from intervention projects; and identify features and factors that bear on the sustainability of programmes and /or their positive impacts.

16. A vital part of evaluation is to, appropriately and responsibly, disseminate the findings so that they can positively influence other people when they are designing

intervention programmes, designing evaluations for them or considering applications for funding.

17. Evaluations and evaluators should take steps to reinforce networks that share good practice, effective tools, and knowledge of resources and protocols that work when evaluating specific kinds of service in particular regions.

18. If possible, evaluation should include follow-up studies that are intended to learn about long-term effects that may be associated with psychosocial intervention programmes a long time after they have been completed.

19. Evaluation should identify the factors that contribute to either the success or failure of particular types of project.

20. It is important that evaluation the methods and practices of evaluation used and evaluators are evaluated as that enables replication of evaluation activities of proven worth and effectiveness reinforces good practice and helps to reduce costs

Evaluation Methods

21. Evaluations should be conducted in ways that recognize the needs of all of the people who are involved, encourage reciprocity between donors and programme staff, and invite participants to give honest feedback to the funders/donors. Experience shows that, in order to achieve these intentions and avoid unnecessary problems, it is best:

a. to design evaluation programmes from the beginning (i.e. from the time when each intervention programme is being designed and developed);

b. to plan for and conduct continuing and open communications between programmes' proposers and delivers and funders or donors throughout the life of each programme;

c. to base the process of designing and implementing evaluation on agreed guidelines; and

d. if the stakeholders work together to design each evaluation to ensure that the evaluators understand the programmes that they are evaluating; to this end, the evaluators should spend time in observation with the staff and beneficiaries of each programme.

22. Evaluation should be based on a comprehensive description of and narrative relating to each project in which the project's intentions are clear as are the interventions to be offered. Early contact with outside evaluators can assist the people who design and deliver programmes to be clear about their programmes.

23. The intentions set for and expectations of each evaluation should be clearly agreed from the outset. In particular, the evaluation plan should be clear about who is asking for what. This means that donors, evaluators and programme delivers should recognize that evaluations may be required to achieve a range of objectives and be carried out at differing levels in order to satisfy the particular requirements and/or the diversity of stakeholders' needs (e.g. evaluations may be required to cover strategic, managerial and practice features, programme activities, programme delivery methods and application of monies). Clarity about these matters is likely to

reduce any risks of evaluations and evaluators neglecting or obstructing the original intentions of the projects with which they are concerned. Therefore:

- a. the methods employed in every evaluation should be suited to the tasks set for the evaluation and the programme; and
- b. evaluation should take into account the complexity of the project so not to single out the interests of specific stakeholders.

24. Experience shows that:

- a. a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods is often necessary to achieve what is required in an evaluation;
- b. the indicators chosen should be appropriately related to the particular objectives set for each project and its anticipated and intended achievements;
- c. it is important for evaluators to be aware of any biases that they may bring to their work;
- d. it is useful to develop a protocol for each evaluation as a guide for the evaluators and field workers that details the series of steps to be taken in the evaluation; and it is important to document examples of measuring effectively quality of life or psychosocial well-being.

Comments: The program of the meeting was a very good combination of academic inputs and inputs from field workers. Matching both sides, resulted in a productive dialogue enabling better understanding and cooperation between evaluators and field workers. Representatives of donor organizations (US AID) and decision makers (Ministries) presented their views, needs and requirements for the process of selection of funded programs.

In the initial plan the presence of colleagues from Iraq was foreseen which would be a solid bases for discussing the issue of evaluation in areas of terrorist acts. Unfortunately Iraqi colleagues were not in capacity to come and the participant from Israel cancelled his arrival the last moment due to the security situation in his country. This was the cause that relatively small attention was paid to the evaluation of programs in areas affected by terrorism. The lesson learned is that sometimes for uncontrollable reasons some planned aims of ARWs can not be realized.

An evidence of the actuality of the treated topic was also the wish expressed by some participants to replicate the conference in their countries. This was not done. Again, additional efforts are needed to implement some very important incentives, particularly incentives for dissemination of the ARWs contents in participating regions/counties.

Two important outcomes of the conference were thoroughly prepared recommendations and the publication of presented and discussed materials in *Intervention - The International Journal of Mental Health, Psychosocial Work and Counseling in Areas of Armed Conflicts* (special issue dedicated to the ARW). The Journal is world widely read and the published articles were frequently quoted in the respective literature. May be it would be useful for the dissemination of outputs of ARWs to encourage speakers and other participants to publish their presentations, rapports, reflections, etc in relevant professional journals, websites, etc.. An evidence of the actuality of the treated topic was also the wish expressed by some participants to replicate the conference in their countries.

An evidence of the actuality of the treated topic was also the wish expressed by some participants to replicate the conference in their countries. The conferences outcomes and recommendations were presented at the conference on inclusion and migration in Graz (Austria) in 2007.

The Chechen group recommended treating in the next ARW the issue of returnees. This issue was very important also for former Yugoslav countries that supported the Chechen incentive. The topic was treated in the ARW hold in Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) in 2009.

2.3. Activating Local Resources for the Protection of Psychosocial Development of Children on Territories Affected by War and Terrorism (Prishtina, Kosovo, 2008)

The basic assumptions for organizing this ARW were:

- Mental health and psychosocial functioning are of crucial importance for peacekeeping and social reconstruction of territories affected by armed conflicts. The most important possibilities of enhancing the mental health and psychosocial functioning of the population are programs directed towards children and youth. The main reasons are: Those two groups can be reached by psychosocial interventions in the frame of the school system, their developmental stage, make them particularly receptive for positive (and negative) influences; they are the future of each society.
- The international community is investing important sums in mental health and psychosocial programs for children and youth. Those investments are much too often used for the implementation of "imported" programs under the leadership of foreign experts. Local resources are not sufficiently activated, although local recourses are the only reliable basis for psychosocial activities integrated in the local social tissue - social systems, civil society and communities and for the development of sustainable protective processes.

The objectives of the ARW were

- to explain and justify the philosophy and priority of activating local resources in the process of fostering the psychosocial recovery of communities affected by war and terrorism;
- to demonstrate models of good practice of use of foreign resources for activation of domestic resources;
- to confront the views and strategies used by foreign donors and implementing agencies, and views and evaluations by local partner organisations or institutions, and recipients of assistance;
- to analyse the role of local NGOs in the process of recovery and social

reconstruction of the country;

- to highlight the importance of empowerment of local institutional systems in the process of recovery;
- to show the importance and strategies of enhancing the coping capacities and psychosocial health of youth;
- to show the interrelatedness of individual recovery and community recovery;
- to analyse obstacles and most frequently encountered problems in local capacity building and achieving sustainability;
- to produce recommendations based on the materials presented at and discussed in the workshop;
- to present models of good practices;
- to prepare guidelines and criteria for programs based on local resources.

Recommendations:

1. External actors must work collaboratively with the affected population to: identify needs, frame response, mobilise resources.

For this structural change is needed in the humanitarian sector to compensate the inevitable inequalities of power. Activating local resources for the promotion of psychosocial development of individuals and communities requires the active participation of communities in the definition of needs, elaboration of projects, and allocation of resources and evaluation of programs. It means therefore: establishing relationships of mutual respect and mutual acknowledgement between organisations (international NGOs, local NGOs and government institutions) and between individuals (local professionals, state representatives, community members and international experts). Also structural changes (in tenders, funding and education of humanitarian and developmental aid etc.) are needed.

2. The use of resources needs to be based on collaboration in order to facilitate individual and community recovery, development and empowerment as simultaneous processes.
3. Activation of local resources is a process that requires time, information sharing, developing a shared vision as well as agreement on common goals and priorities.
4. The focus on the activation of local resources in the psychosocial domain requires a modification of the training curricula (in the universities, institutes for training of teachers, etc.) in order to put more emphasis on community work and to give the necessary skills to the future professionals to meet community needs and to establish relationships of true cooperation with community members (sustainability).

5. Formal and informal (health, legal and social) systems in general should collaborate in order to achieve the best use of the resources as they provide services which focus on more severe and less severe health needs, respectively. While it seems clear that a health system must be open to all without regard of more evident differences like those of gender, ethnic group or religion efforts should also be made to lower the threshold for members of other marginalized groups like the losers of change, inhabitants of remote rural areas or the local poor.
6. Activation of local resources and enhancing participation actions is a stepwise process that may start with information and knowledge disseminations, public awareness rising of the mental health consequences of war and terrorism, identifying local natural leaders and treatment opportunities. The evaluation of programs needs to be turned towards the identification of lacks and failures as well as learning from past unachieved goals in addition to the determination of positive results and achievements.
7. Schools, health systems and other existing institutions and organisations at a local level are most important sources of social recovery and development. They should be adequately supported.
8. The media are a powerful stakeholder. They should be involved in a positive way in enhancing the activation of local resources.
9. Linking the governmental and nongovernmental sector when covering social needs (at a local, national and international level), cooperation through partnership should be extended and intensified.
10. Networks and networking are important resources for support and activation of initiatives. A prerequisite for functional networks is that they are dynamic and that members feel involved and identify with the aims.

Comments:

This ARW stemmed from some critical views of NGOs and institutions from countries affected by armed conflicts on the foreign and international aid in the psychosocial field. In the emergency phase imported models might be useful and appreciated by the affected country. But in the post-conflict phase with still many psychosocial problems generated by armed conflicts and by post-conflict adversities, as poverty, unemployment, crash of value systems exist, transferring the ownership of the programs and activities on local resources is an imperative not sufficiently taken into account by foreign donors and program designers.

The achievement of the objectives is evident from publication of AWR proceedings and added related contents in the publication “Activating Psychosocial Resources in Territories Affected by War and Terrorism”. Ed. by E. Baloch Kaloianov and A. Mikuš Kos. NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme. E: Human and Social Dynamics – Vol. 57, IOS Press, 2009. (169 pages).

The publication contains a comprehensive presentation of programs in Kosovo which are excellent examples of using foreign money for local capacity building and empowerment of local resources for running psychosocial programs.

This ARW contributed to the development of some school based psychosocial activities in Balkans and Caucasus funded by foreign money but owned by local organizations and systems.

2.4. Returnees and the social Reconstruction of Communities affected by Armed Conflict (Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2009)

This ARW was organized as an answer of the suggestions proposed by the North Caucasus group and the Balkan group during the ARW held in Lipica (Slovenia) in 2007.

Objectives:

Obtaining an overview and an insight into the situation of returnees in the regions of the Balkans and Caucasus;

Analyzing the difficulties of the return process and which conditions/ interventions can facilitate this process;

Discussing how returnees can contribute in a positive or negative way to the process of the social recovery of communities and countries affected by inter - ethnic conflicts: promoting social stability by supporting the social group of returnees and preventing them from becoming a social risk factor;

Presenting models of good practices which alleviate or prevent difficulties stemming from repatriation;

Proposing recommendations for a successful reintegration of returnees into the society and for their activation in local/ regional social processes.

An important component of post-conflict peace-building is refugee repatriation and reintegration. Rebuilding war-torn societies and maintaining peace is a complex and contentious process at many levels of analysis. The issue of return has as well become a “vital and integral component” of the European political reality and immigration and asylum policies. The aim to define and consolidate common return

policies among the member states of the EU as host countries of refugees and future returnees calls for identifying models of good practice based on a critical evaluation of existing return programs and policies which generally still lack the aspect of reintegration, essential to the promotion of political and social stability.

The issue of returnees in Europe is particularly important for countries affected by armed conflicts stemming from former Yugoslavia as many returnees are expected to arrive in the near future. Therefore the analysis and reflection on the situation in this region were the main focus of the Workshop. The second tackled region was the Caucasus region.

The presence of a mixed group of participants – politicians, NGO workers in the field of return, scientist – analysts made possible to get an overview about the real situation of returnees, about present models of good practices of reintegration of returnees, but also about huge existing problems which are often not officially recognized and to which sufficient attention is not paid. It was stated that In order to guarantee an effective implementation and sustainability of support measures it is essential to monitor and evaluate operations and to ascertain follow-up care for affected returnees.

Although there are country policies and strategies developed by international agencies for the integration and arrangement of status of refugees, there is a considerable gap between these politics and reality. The results of the workshop were analyses of the reality of return. Practical and system related difficulties of reintegration, such as the impossibility to get employment due to the high level of unemployment (for instance in Kosovo at 60%) and individual psychosocial and psychological problems such as difficulties in accepting and adapting to the changed situation in the native land, re-traumatization; problems stemming from face to face encounters among members of antagonistic parties.

Even persons returning to their homes in environments with population of the returnees' ethnicity, have particular problems. In addition to problems with employment and other huge economic and financial difficulties, they are often not well received by those who did not migrate. Returnees are often considered as cowards who fled in hard times when other patriotically remained in their native land, as those who lived well around in rich Western countries in contrast to the remaining ones who suffered from multiple war-related adversities.

An important discussed topic was reconciliation. Obviously the process of reconciliation has been and still is idealized by politicians and scientists. The conference gave many instances for obstacles in the reconciliation process. Those were presented by participants from former Yugoslavia who were directly affected by traumas and losses during wars. A shift toward a more realistic perception and expectations concerning reconciliation is in progress. For instance, we heard that UNHCR is replacing the term of "reconciliation" with terms like "conviviality", "common life" and "cooperation". Reconciliation can happen at the end of the process or may not be reached ever - it is a matter of individual decision of each group member and their socio-emotional capacity to put the past to rest.

The group of participants believes that the concept of community social reconstruction is much more feasible and realistic than the concept of reconciliation. The efforts should be directed at social reconstruction of communities in which the former enemies have to return as well, and have to be reintegrated into the everyday life social and work activities, have equal opportunities and receive fair treatment by the majority group. Besides, a joint basis for a common history and truth in order to prevent further conflicts based on differently perceived realities leading to mistrust and further hostilities.

Much discussion was dedicated to the possibilities of NGOs to facilitate the process of resettlement and integration. NGOs' activities are of wide range: psychosocial assistance to children and adults, facilitating the situation of women, acting as pressure groups, taking care of practical issues, etc. Some exposed cases showed that when energetic people take action, mountains can be moved.

It was stressed that countries that receive returnees have the good possibilities to help the children. School children are "regularly employed", they are included in the institutions (schools) in the frame of which support and assistance can be provided. Schools can create a favorable psychosocial climate for children and foster their integration. Timing of supportive measures is very important. Support and facilitation of integration in schools should start from the very beginning before problems emerge. A good school integration and success of their children is a comforting factor for parents as well. In a realistic appreciation we can often find out that possibilities to assist parents are quite limited, but a lot can be done for the social integration of children.

In the frame of the reported ARW a special place was given to the situation in Kosovo. The field research "*The Challenge of Good Practice in International Return Programs to Kosovo*" performed by OMEGA - Health Care Center Graz, Austria, the International Medical Program, Sweden and the Slovene Philanthropy (2008) was presented. In a critical discussion of international return policies to Kosovo recommendations for good practice in the implementation of international return programs were formulated. Participants from Kosovo benefitted much from the ARW in knowledge, know how and motivation and energy to improve the very bad situation of returnees in Kosovo. In Caucasus area the migration processes in North Ossetia, South Ossetia and Georgia were presented. The group from Chechnya which was the main agent requiring the treatment of return in the frame of ARW was not able to attend the meeting due to objective obstacles.

Comments: This ARW had a most tangible impact on the preparation for return and actual return of migrants from Kosovo (refugees, political migrants, economic migrants). In 2010 a program on return covering the whole Republic of Kosovo took place. It was initiated and organized by participants of the 2009 AWR in Sarajevo. Included in the program were 120 representatives of Ministries relevant for return, local regional authorities, representatives of the educational, health, social welfare, employment and other systems involved in the process of reintegration of returnees. Returnees were also members of the group. The agent of activities was the Kosovar NGO - QPEA which was hosting the NATO ARW run in Prishtina in 2008. The funds for this process were raised by Omega – Graz, the main organizer of the 2009 AWR in Sarajevo. Members of 9 regional multidisciplinary working groups treated the issue

of return and reintegration of returnees in a holistic way and prepared a catalogue of recommendation and requirements to be addressed to authorities. The groups elaborated plans for future actions, among them, a national meeting on the issue of return, linking the governmental and NGO sector. The high value of the benefits of the Sarajevo 2009 NATO ARW generated the suggestion to organize a second NATO ARW on return in Kosovo. What is going on in Kosovo in the field of preparation of the arrival of about 40.000 returnees from Western Europe is an outstanding example of dissemination and implementation of ARWs products in countries affected by armed conflicts. We assume that this huge impact of the NATO ARW was due to the large space that was given in the frame of the ARW to local participants from ex - Yugoslav countries which are confronted with the reality of return and reintegration of returnees.

The result of the presented NATO ARW was the EU- project *Return and Impact: The voice of Stakeholders and Returnees 2007-2009* (see also at <http://www.omega-graz.at/projekte/03-returnimpact.shtml>)

The elaborated strategies for facilitation of the return were published as a catalogue of recommendations *Returnees to Kosovo and their Social Reintegration* in German and Albanian language. You may download it free of charge at www.omega-graz.at

3. Characteristics of presented ARWs

The file rouge of all reported Advanced Research Workshops is the concept of community based endeavors and actions for recovery, social reconstruction and post conflict development. The term “community based” does not mean only assistance and interventions focused on the community as a whole. A pillar of this concept and derived strategies of actions is the activation of community based resources for reducing problems caused by armed conflicts, terrorist acts and post conflict adversities. The next basic assumption is that psychological and psychosocial processes in individuals – from traumatization, grief and other damages to coping, recovery and development, are inseparably connected with respective social and economic processes in the community.

The second characteristic is maintaining sustainability of the processes initiated and triggered by the program **Science for Peace and Security** through continuity of activities – Advanced Research Workshops and continuity in maintaining cooperation among participating organizations.

The topics of the ARWs are identified during the previous ARW, so it reflects the needs of participating countries.

A common feature of all ARWs is uniting practitioners, field workers, scholars, researchers, donors, administrators, politicians which is a solid basis for developing a holistic view on the treated issues. Participants are persons that either do research on these topics or have practical experience in the post-conflict or ongoing-conflict situations. The scope of the ARWs is not only or even not predominantly theoretical or research-based, but in a substantial part experientially based. Good practice and community initiatives are the focus of presentations and discussions because this is what these majority of speakers/participants are best at and need

mostly. The matching of theoretical analysis with the state of matter, observations, reflections and analytic perspective of field workers, makes the ARWs a forum of mutual learning for both sides – the scholastic one and the field side. The philosophy of the process realized in the frame of the ARWs has some characteristics of action researches – namely the players of the field implementation of the programme confront their reflection and findings with external observers/researchers. The interactive process among field players and other players generates important outputs in field work and practice, dissemination and implementation of produced knowledge and know how.

ARWs are a forum for building cross country cooperation, joint regional and cross-border programs of participating countries. This is of particular benefit for distant countries as North Caucasus countries which have difficulties to establish direct face to face contacts with eventual partners or donors. Several joint project have emerged from the networking developed during the ARWs, which were implemented in Kosovo and North Caucasus.

ARWs are giving priority to the two regions in which the applicant NGOs are most involved – Western Balkans and North Caucasus. With focusing on two regions, a profound and action relevant analysis of specific circumstances and processes can be run and concrete recommendations can be put into practice through programs and field activities. In addition, networks of cooperation can be developed.

Participants are chosen according to the respective NATO commission requirement. Included in each ARW is a core group of representatives from Western Balkans and North Caucasus, representatives of countries in which the treated topic is of particular relevance, and renowned specialists in the treated topics. This creates a productive international multidisciplinary tissue generating intellectual/cognitive effects and empowering and motivating effects which is of particular importance for field work.

All ARWs produced recommendations for dealing with the topic treated in the ARWs. Published materials are disseminating and promoting findings, statements, models of good practice and recommendations of the ARWs.

The leading and basic principle of the NATO Programme Security through Science is realized through treating topics most closely related to the security issue, inviting participants from opposite sides, creating an atmosphere of cordial discussion, strengthening links and cross border and cross group exchanges, fostering and facilitating cooperation, and enhancing the implementation of know how in the frame of field programmes run in included countries.

4. Suggestions for the future

4.1 Some suggestions for increasing the impact of ARWs

Organizing ARWs with similar topics or some of them, in interested participating countries affected by armed conflicts and terrorism;

Preparing short guidelines on some treated topics for local agencies and field workers and facilitating the distribution of those;

Preparing ARWs driven project proposals which would be submitted to potential donors as products of the ARWs. This might be an element of justification and facilitate fund raising.

4.2 Nato ARW in 2011: Challenges of reconciliation in the post-conflict communities (Mlini, Dubrovnik, Croatia, 28.04.- 01.05.2011)

Objective: The workshop will explore the concept of reconciliation in the post-conflict communities; review the good practice and community initiatives that contribute to resuming the inter-group relations among former adversaries.

Justification: The last ARW "**RETURNEES AND THE SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION OF COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT**" organized in Sarajevo in 2009 opened the question and identified the need for addressing in the following ARW the issue of reconciliation which is strongly connected with return and rebuilding of safe and prosperous communities.

Reconciliation is nowadays a much challenged issue. It is a complex and multidimensional concept enclosing individual, group and community levels, including psychological, social, economic and legal dimensions. Even more important than theoretical aspects, is the reality and dynamic of the process of reconciliation in areas affected by armed conflicts and terrorist acts and the questions which foster or hamper the process of reconciliation. The experience shows that reconciliation processes have been more difficult and less successful than expected.

The process of reconciliation is mostly described by foreign, external observer and analysts. Those who experienced atrocities and losses during conflicts, and members of the side responsible for a misdeed are underrepresented among discussants about reconciliation in scientific platforms. The result could be biased and idealized views on the process of reconciliation. Therefore the proposed ARW has the intention to confront and bring together at the same time the views of scientists that study the reconciliation processes with the experiences, views and attitudes of those who were direct participants of armed conflicts.

The proposed ARW will pay particular attention to identification of feasible interventions and processes which can influence in a positive way the process of reconciliation. Models of good practices from countries experiencing past or present armed conflicts will be brought together and discussed.

Proposed speakers and proposed presentations:

What is reconciliation? - its reality from the perspective of the victims (Dr. Peter Heintz, Psychiatrist and Psycho-therapist, London UK/ Germany);

The psychological aspects of conflict and reconciliation (Prof. Dr. Ed Cairns, University of Ulster, Northern Ireland)

Culture of conflict and culture of reconciliation in the context of protracted conflict (Professor Dr. Arie Nadler, Tel Aviv University, Israel);

Pros and cons regarding possibilities of reconciliation in the post-conflict communities (Professor Dean Ajdukovic, University of Zagreb, Croatia);

What can we learn from longitudinal studies of post-conflict communities? (Professor Dr. Dinka Corkalo Biruski, University of Zagreb, Croatia);

Children's feelings and attitudes toward former enemies and perpetrators (Dr. med. Anica Mikuš Kos, Slovenia);

The victims and the perpetrators (Dr. Jean Claude Mettraux, University of Lausanne, Switzerland);

The reality of reconciliation and ways forward on territories of former Yugoslavia: **Croatia**;

The reality of reconciliation and ways forward on territories of former Yugoslavia: **Bosnia and Herzegovina**;

The reality of reconciliation and ways forward on territories of former Yugoslavia: **Kosovo**;

The reality of reconciliation and ways forward on territories of former Yugoslavia: **Serbia**;

Living together after Beslan (speaker from North Ossetia – Alania);

Prospective of normalization of inter-community relations after the Georgian – Russian conflict (Dr. Nino Okribelashvili, Georgia);

How do we live together in North Caucasus? (Ljuba Arcakova, NGO Denal, Russian Federation)

4.3 Formalizing the Caucasian – Balkan network cooperating in the frame of the NATO Programme Security through Science

The aim of this initiative is to strengthen the links and cooperation between the two regions which have many common features among which are most important: they are multiethnic and multi-confessional with repetitive interethnic conflicts and they are both post-socialist regions facing the process of transition and related social crisis.

Justification: Already ten years there is cooperation in the field of psychosocial assistance to children and families developed through activities of the NGOs and directors involved in the reported ARWs. Those activities have had a broad peace and stability building dimension, first of all through linking different ethnicities (for instance, Albanians and Serbs; Ingushetia/Chechnya and North Ossetia). Such interethnic linkage was realized in the frame of psychosocial programs for teachers, Mine Risk Education programmes for teachers (Kosovo), Children' rights, etc. Thousands of teachers were included in the mentioned programmes run by the three NGOs who are the organizers of ARWs – Slovene Philanthropy, Omega and Society for Psychological Assistance (SPA), Zagreb, Croatia. Similar programmes have been launched by the Slovene Philanthropy in both regions, first of all development of voluntary work of children and youth in the frame of the school as a means of civic education for participative citizenship.

The target group of many programs are school workers. Teachers are a very responsive and receptive group for implementation of interethnic programmes because they need new knowledge for similar job related difficulties stemming from consequences of armed conflicts and post-conflict social adversities. Teachers of different ethnicities can work together on a common ground, through face to face encounters they are able to work through their negative feelings. Teachers are very influential persons in their communities not only as educators of children, but also as opinion leaders, particularly in rural area.

Both regions – Western Balkans and North Caucasus were represented in all reported ARWs. Topics treated in ARWs were common to both regions.

The collaboration in the frame of the de facto already existing Western Balkans – North Caucasus network would be facilitated through a more formal structure. The organizational form should be discussed and agreed between stakeholders from both regions.

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