



Dušica Popadić and Dr. Ljiljana Bogavac

www.incesttraumacentar.org.rs

**POLICY AND RESILIENCE OF A WOMEN'S NGO
ACTIVE IN THE FIELD OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE**
Experience of Incest Trauma Center - Belgrade, Serbia

We Can Do It!



**EU TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
TO CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS
IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY**



**RECONSTRUCTION
WOMEN'S FUND**

Impressum

2021©Incest Trauma Center – Belgrade, Serbia

The Incest Trauma Center – Belgrade presents you
**Policy and Resilience of a Women's NGO
Active in the Field of Sexual Violence;
Experience of Incest Trauma Center – Belgrade, Serbia.**

Authors:

Dušica Popadić and Dr. Ljiljana Bogavac

Translation:

Radmila Vujović

Design and desktop publishing:

Svetlana Pavlović

Cover Illustration by J. Howard Miller, 1943

*This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union.
Its contents are the sole responsibility of the Incest Trauma Center – Belgrade
and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.*

*Publication was supported also by
the Reconstruction Women's Fund from Belgrade, Serbia.*

December 2021

ISBN 978-86-911569-6-1

*We would like to thank Marleen Diekmann Schoemaker and Peter Spijkers
for providing us with a sound basis for organisational development
and freedom in our work.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Introduction.....	5
We are... ..	7
Foreword: ITC Dossier.....	12
Chapter 1: Identity and background information from the pioneering stage of organisational development.....	21
Chapter 2: Our heart is on the side of recovery from sexual trauma	26
Chapter 3: Policies and Procedures of the organisation	34
Chapter 4: Ethical leadership	35
Chapter 5: Connecting with relevant resources.....	38
Chapter 6: Policy and resilience.....	39
Chapter 7: Attitude of the community to a women's organisation that has a clear mission and independent policy	44
Chapter 8: Attitude of donor organisations towards a women's organisation with a clear mission and independent policy	48
Chapter 9: Workbook; Policy and organisational philosophy	52

Introduction

We, members of Incest Trauma Center – Belgrade, have been firmly committed to our work in the field of sexual violence for twenty-eight years. It is not easy to survive and remain in this field as an independent non-profit organisation, a women's NGO and a specialised service in the field of sexual violence. This is particularly not easy in Serbia and when you are from Serbia, a country in which, due to a number of backlash trends, democracy has not yet taken root.

In order to become and remain a successful organisation, we have been learning a lot and constantly about organisational development and organisational health from our colleagues from Western Europe and the United States. We believed it was of crucial importance for the quality of our work. Since our establishment, we have worked under the Dutch supervision, which helped us have a watchful eye, focusing in parallel on the quality of psychological assistance we provide to child and adult survivors of sexual violence and on organisational development issues.

Before you are the pages in which we describe our experience and present our experienced knowledge. Experienced knowledge for us means a lot of lessons learned. We are sharing them with you so that it can become an ownership of all of us, thus potentially benefitting everyone, to the extent of your choice. At the same time, contained here are also our insights about what we have learned in the course of the assistance we provided based on our knowledge in the field of organisational development to other women's organisations over many years. Back in the 90ies, we started referring to this part of our services as "Groupwork in practice", which relates to the provision of training, supervisory, advisory, consulting and mentoring services to other organisations of different profiles that are not just women's organisations. The entire being of Incest Trauma Center - Belgrade is centred on child and adult survivor of sexual violence (in practice, adult survivor is most commonly a woman). Our mission is to improve the social status of child and adult survivors of sexual violence. The policy we have chosen consciously is exclusively in the service of a child who experienced sexual trauma, a woman who was exposed to sexual violence, every child and adult who are a target of a hate crime such as sexual abuse. As women working in a women's NGO in the field of sexual violence, we have attempted to make it clearer to you why we decided to leave the comfort zone of our socially desirable professions in the area of mental health and invest ourselves in the less-than-popular social topics and engagement that, due to the policy selected, may jeopardise our physical security and mental health.

Resilience means ability to bounce back and withstand adversity, adaptability, personal/organisational style of dealing with difficulties, capacity to recover quickly from setbacks. It also indicates the ability to cope adequately with stress, to use human capacities (individual, group or community) to deal with crises and normal experiences in an emotionally and physically healthy way. Here we will present to you the profile of our organisation's resilience, as an example. In this way, we wish to encourage you to recognise your constructive methods and behaviours that you may already be practicing and are part of your resilience as an organisation, as well as to suggest and support potential future, additional activities that may increase your resilience.

Use our example as an opportunity to reflect on your organisation. There is no recipe, only the necessity to learn about organisational development. Resilience is a personal trait and, in this context, presents an attribute of an organisation, which means there are no two organisations that will respond in the same manner to the challenges they face.

Please make your own notes, perhaps after reading you will contact us to fill in the blanks together. Organisational development is a complex puzzle. Any experience you have can be a new piece of the puzzle, which we can present together on a future occasion.

We invite you, after reading this content and drawing inspiration from the insights gained, to continue learning about organisational development. The objective is a working environment and organisational culture that nurture their members of women's organisations, encouraging and empowering them, and above all – a safe environment for each member.

We hope that our experience will help you discover the areas on which you need to focus in order to build or improve your resilience and enhance your ability to thrive. We wish you to benefit equally from it in the peaceful days of your organisation's life, as well as in the days when you feel you are in the midst of uncertainty or change.

Dušica Popadić and Dr. Ljiljana Bogavac

WE ARE...

The Incest Trauma Center – Belgrade (ITC; officially registered in 1994) is a women's non-governmental organization, a service specialized in the Sexual Assault issue. The professionals were originally trained in the sphere of health and mental health. More details about the activities of the ITC can be downloaded at www.incesttraumacentar.org.rs and www.ijasamuztebe.org.rs. Within our **Crisis Intervention Center**, we provide [psychological assistance to child and adult survivors of sexual violence and their supportive persons](#) (6 reported cases per week; the only representative statistical data on the national level on the social problem of sexual abuse of children for the period 1994-2019, which was published annually, incorporated in several national strategies and reports for the Republic of Serbia; starting from 2020, in accordance with the new Strategic plan, online counseling only). At the same time, we work as a **Training Center** and after 28 years of ITC activities, our diverse training programs have been attended by 12792 from 1046 GOs and NGOs (4/5 from GOs). All the ITC educational and preventative programs have been conceived and realized on the grounds of our team's direct daily service provision in the context of violence against women and children. Our trainers were authors and personally delivered our ed. programs accredited by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health of Serbia as well as the leader of ITC Trainers' Team is certified in Supervision and Training skills in Child Protection by the NSPCC, UK, and holds accreditation on competency in the Training for Trainers in Child Protection issued by the NSPCC, UK. (Just two illustrations: over the period 2001-2003, in partnership with the Ministry of the Interior, we trained police officers from 11 towns, starting from public law and order, then sex offences and juvenile delinquency departments to teachers on all three levels of police schooling (effective 42 hours of work); 2005-2011, in partnership with the Ministry of Justice of RS, for the personnel of 4 penitentiary institutions in the territory of Serbia working with women and minor perpetrators of criminal offences. Educational programs of basic and advanced level (42 + 58 effective hours of work); 2004-2017, delivering 3-level trainings to the schools and kindergartens that were afterwards entering the National Network of Schools and Kindergartens against Sexual Assault which was founded by ITC. Within our identity of the **Sexual Assault Prevention Center**, 8,713 children and adolescents completed our 10 weeks long "Healthy Choices for Kids" Prevention Program for teachers, parents and kids. Besides, within ITC, the Sexual Assault Prevention Peer Team run our Sexual Assault Prevention Club (schoolers age 11 to 17 run the Club assisted by our Volunteers mainly of age 19 to 25). Within this identity, we also ran a several surveys and collected data to identify further lines of operation. [To emphasize, in period 2014-2017, ITC was developing Co-management Model of decision making process, joint by staff and youth involved and this includes decision-making youth structures in ITC daily practice and youth participation in evaluation.](#)

In June 2001, the ITC founded and for 6 years provided focused active coordination of **The Network of Trust against gender-based violence** (an intervention team of trained practitioners from 15 GOs and NGOs, who in the course of their daily professional activities provide assistance to child and adult survivors to all forms of violence). [The Network of Trust was 1st multi-disciplinary network in this field in Serbia.](#) We are experienced in public campaigns and lobbying (e.g. in the period 2007 - 2011, we were implementing a nationwide campaign against sexual violence entitled "[The Me Nobody Knows](#)", one of the specific aims of which was the introduction of the topic of Sexual Assault into the national (pre-)school curricula, syllabi and textbooks; also the Council of Europe Campaign "[1 IN 5](#)" in Serbia in the period 2012-2015). We note 1429 appearances in media.

In accordance with the ITC Strategic Plan for the period 2015-2020 (started this line of operation in 2009), our main identity is related to the **Sexual Assault Prevention Center**, and accordingly, some of the results have been:

- a) State Excellence Award “for special contribution to awareness-raising concerning the unacceptability of sexual and gender-based violence” (The Ministry of Social Policy of Serbia, 2010)
- b) Finalist in 2011 and recipient in 2012 of the award “REWARD” of the National PR Society of Serbia in the category “Communication in the non-profit sector”; note:: ITC has been the only competitor that both years created and implemented its Campaign on our own, with no hiring marketing agency;
- c) Appointment by the Council of Europe in Strasburg as the official national partner in the Campaign against child sexual assault for the Republic of Serbia, the Campaign entitled “ONE in FIVE”, based on the Lanzarote Convention (according to the signed agreement, in the course of the entire Campaign, 2012-2015)
- d) The official song “Stop the Silence!” of ITC Campaign in Serbia has been in 2012 handed over to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg and it was designated as the official song of “ONE in FIVE” Campaign on European level to be used by the member-states
- e) In April 2013, the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia adopted ITC Initiative FOR the rescinding of the Statute of Limitations concerning sex offences committed against children. In this way, Serbia became second country in Europe, after UK, where the Law recognizes long-term effects of sexual trauma (comparing with earlier regulation when child sexual abuse offender could be prosecuted only six years after the last incident of sexual abuse occurred). Now, the survivor was provided the right to report and start up a criminal procedure when gaining psychic strength and social power necessary to act as a more equal participant in prosecution. ITC officially initiated and worked intensively toward this historical change of legislation
- f) In 2014, ITC staff wrote up themselves and with associates from schools provided numerous resources for learning on Sexual Assault issue in the classroom within the national (pre-)school curriculum and relevant textbooks (incl. opening 1st **Sexual Assault Peer Prevention Club** that has been with its program activities also put at disposal of the Ministry of Education of Serbia and its Violence Prevention Unit). We continued designing ed. resources in coming year.
- g) In 2015, ITC has been the owner, leader and author of the [1st National Study in Serbia on Prevalence and Incidence of Childhood Sexual Assault](#) that we nowadays carry out directly in the field (in 97 primary and secondary schools) in co-operation with the Ministry of Education of Serbia and the Women’s Health Promotion Center from Belgrade, supported by the Delegation of EU to Serbia. The Preliminary Report published in June 2015 and the Final Report in October 2015, followed by a new 3D ed. resource for children, youth, parents and teachers www.ijasamuztebe.org.rs („I am here for you, too!“). Meanwhile, we worked parallel as the member of the Task-force of the Parliament of Serbia (Child Rights Committee in charge now to propose improvements in Family Law in chapters concerning Child Abuse) as well as co-operated with the Gender Equality Co-ordination Body of the Government of Serbia where we had contributed to the Action Plan 2015 with actions concerning introduction of Child Sexual Assault issue into the national school curriculum for kindergartens, primary and secondary schools and also provided contribution to the Draft of new Gender Equality Law. In 2015, by being the subject of two Public Hearings in the Parliament of Serbia, the Sexual Assault issue has reached its highest point ever concerning its visibility on a public agenda. In September 2015, in partnership with the Women’s Parliamentary Network, we presented results of the National Study in the Parliament. Then in 11 towns in Serbia ITC led the Public Discussion together with the Ministry of Education in order to Draft the **Strategy in Education for Prevention of Child Sexual Assault** in the Republic of Serbia and we included both school students and adults from different sectors. **Based on the results of 1st National Study and Public Discussion,**

on November 18 (The European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Abuse), again with the Women's Parliamentary Network, the Ministry of Education and the Republic Ombuds office, we presented the Strategy at the Public Hearing in the Parliament of Serbia. Authors' team that wrote up the Strategy in Education was consisted of the Ministry of Education (Violence Prevention Unit / Group for the Protection against Violence and Discrimination) and the Incest Trauma Center – Belgrade and the Strategy was adopted by the Ministry of Education. Immediately afterwards, [we submitted to the Parliament ITC Initiative on Prevention of Retraumatization within Criminal Prosecution concerning Survivors of Childhood Sexual Assault \(requesting Monitoring role of the Parliament regarding protection legislative measures in accordance with the Lanzarote Convention\)](#). In February 2016, the Initiative was presented to members of the Parliament in co-operation with the Ombuds office and its Child Rights Division that wrote up the legal formulation of the Initiative. Our work on this Initiative has still been underway.

In period 2016 – March 2017, we run the National Campaign called „I AM HERE FOR YOU, TOO!“ and, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and selected school personnel pool, wrote up Educational Packs for kindergarten and 10 subjects that belong to the national curriculum of primary and secondary schools (total of 764p.). 24 authors from Education field received „Thank You“ Certificate signed by the Minister of Education. On November 18, 2016 in this way the Sexual Assault issue was – after 9 years of advocacy and lobbying of ITC - officially introduced into the national (pre)school curriculum to be learnt by children, youth and parents within a regular life of kindergartens and schools. The high-level profile ceremony we held in the Ceremonial Hall of the Rectorate of the Belgrade University and both the Parliament of Serbia, the Ministry of Education and the Republic Ombuds contributed to this Promotion Day, e.g. having as keynote speakers Chair of Parliamentary Committee for Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality, co-ordinators of the Women Parliamentary Network and Deputy Ombuds for the Rights of the Child and Gender Equality. The Ministry of Education issued the Guidelines on Usage of Educational Packs and together with ITC its representatives made a journey throughout Serbia to teach kindergartens and schools how to use Educational packs. 5 months later, suddenly, the pressure occurred through social networks by clerical and ultra-right wing forces that are active in Serbia and the Minister of Education announced in media only he would withdraw Educational Packs for that moment. No official public letter on the withdrawal was ever issued by the Ministry. Colleagues employed in educational institutions regularly inform us they use the Educational Packs in their work.

Directress of ITC was named the 2016 World of Children Protection Award Honoree and received the Award in the city of New York in October 2016, therefore the Incest Trauma Center - Belgrade now stand together with some of the world's best child advocates. This was the first year of the Protection Award for individuals who recorded and continue to record extraordinary achievements in helping children be safe and free. The media in US often refer to World of Children Award as the Nobel Prize for child advocacy. We received the Congratulation Letter also by the Parliament of Serbia.

In 2017, with support of the Delegation of EC:

1. we founded and handed over to the Ministry of Education the **National Network of Schools and Kindergartens against Sexual Assault**, so that this network became their ownership and
2. we founded and started co-ordinating the **Regional Network against Sexual Assault** gathering women's NGOs with long-term experience in this field aiming to strengthen networking in the Balkan and connect this territory with international professional community.

Starting from March 2017 and to date, ITC has been a Country CAN Partner of The International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (An ISPCAN Country CAN Partner), the largest professional organization in the world concerned with the Child Abuse and Neglect issue.

Both in March 2016 and March 2017, ITC was nominated for The With and For Girls Award. It is an initiative of the With and For Girls Collective which is a group of eight funders: EMpower, Mama Cash, NoVo Foundation, Plan UK, The Global Fund for Children, Nike Foundation, Comic Relief and Stars Foundation who aim to identify and recognize strong grassroots organizations working WITH and FOR girls through their annual Awards. The procedure allows nominations could be made only by trusted referral partners because the Nominee has demonstrated effective practice in creating a supportive and empowering environment for girls.

In May 2017, Directress of ITC was named the 2017 Fulbright Award for Professional Excellence in 2017. The Award "Leader" was established in the aim of affirming excellence in development of science and research, advancing profession and promoting positive social changes. Directress of ITC received the Fulbright Award "for professional accomplishments and contribution to positive social changes reached during 2016 in the field of direct service provision to child sexual assault survivors and the work on prevention of violence against children through educational programmes".

In March 2018, ITC received the FEMINIST RECOGNITION FOR THE ACT OF RESISTENCE IN PUBLIC DOMAIN „for the work on creating Educational Packs for learning on CSA issue and the act of resistance against veto on implementation of Educational Packs.“ The Feminist Recognition awarded by the BeFem, Serbia.

Together with the Founding Team of 1st Regional Network against Sexual Assault, ITC has been continuing actively to contribute to the Network development, therefore by having 13 organizations from 10 European countries in membership, this shape of Network's self-organizing outgrew regional character. Therefore, in 2019 we contributed to the efforts of the Founding Team to formalize the Network's status and respond to its real developmental level, therefore nowadays it operates as a registered legal entity under the name of the **European Women's Network against Sexual Violence, EWNASV** (www.reactagainstsexualviolence.org, www.facebook.com/europeanwomensnetwork/, www.instagram.com/react_against_sexual_violence/);. EWNASV held its 1st International Conference against Sexual Violence in September 2019 in Belgrade which was evaluated highly by its participants. Directress of ITC presently serves as the President of EWNASV in its 2 years long mandate and President of ITC acts in capacity of the Governing Board member for the same period.

Following our newest Strategic Plan, which started in 2020, ITC in future – through participation in EWNASV - shifts its activities mainly to the Western Balkan and European level and works intensively to strengthen ties among EWNASV members to international professional community and to integrate newcomers with high performance quality in the field of Sexual Violence.

In March 2020, ITC drafted the **Advocacy and Lobbying Pack** (213 p.) to obtain support of relevant stakeholders from international community to assist the return of systemic implementation of the Educational Packs to the national curricula of the kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. In spite of withdrawal of the Educational Packs, perpetrated by the minister of education in May 2017 after the negative campaign via social networks by clerical and ultra-right forces – along 3 years a large number of colleagues employed in Education informed ITC that they use Educational Packs regularly in their work with children and parents. The Advocacy and Lobbying Pack is EVIDENCE-BASED DOCUMENT arising from evidence collected through 3 years long monitoring of ITC (2017-2019.) in primary and secondary schools on the territory of Serbia regarding the implementation of the Lanzarote Convention. The findings showed that it was necessary to start again officially, sistemically, implement the Educational Packs in daily life of kindergartens and schools.

In May 2020, ITC joined EWNASV member-organizations in drafting the ***Contribution to the UN SRVAW Thematic Report on Rape.***

In March 2021, ITC and EWNASV publish the findings of ***1st Survey on Social Position, Experiences and Strengths of Women Human Rights Defenders active in the Field of Sexual Violence in Europe***, supported by the Reconstruction Women's Fund which has been an authentic ally to us for longer than 15 years.

In period May-October 2021, ITC partnered with EU TACSO Program and organized a number of sessions for EWNASV members within the Strategic Mentorship Program.

All activities of the Incest Trauma Center – Belgrade continue within the European Women's Network against Sexual Violence.

December 2021

FOREWORD

July 2010.

The essay was submitted to the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs of the Republic of Serbia as part of a call announced in order to promote anti-discrimination policy.

We knew in advance that this paper would not receive an award. We decided to “appropriate” the call and use it as our communication channel. We independently articulated our goal: by reading the essay, civil servants would gain knowledge they refused to attain otherwise.

INTRODUCTION

This is a story about a women's NGO in the Republic of Serbia which, through its expert activities, has been trying to increase the visibility of the social problem of sexual violence against women and children and combat sexual violence against children and women. Furthermore, for 16 years already, the policy of the ITC has been to openly denounce the war crimes committed in the name of the citizens of Serbia during the wars waged by the state of Serbia from 1991 to 1999 in the area of the former Yugoslavia. Also, the ITC demands the handing over of the war crimes indictees to the Hague Tribunal and publicly opts FOR the respect of human rights of the LGBT population. It would indeed be hard to find a more comprehensive approach whose daily implementation provides feedback on the actual state of civil and democratic practices in Serbia. The Incest Trauma Center – Belgrade has decided to respond to this multiple civic engagement of a group of women concerning social issues and their political beliefs through five categories that, in time, metaphorically, became our “senses”: expertise, candor, consistency, persistence and wisdom. The intricacy of the phenomenon of positioning of the most praised group of women, who are also – due to their intransigent year-long publicly advocated policy – the target of perfidious attacks, should be understood in the light of the social and political context in Serbia. Besides, the role of the ‘backlash effect’ has to be taken into account, as a phenomenon whose various manifestations are also present in well organized countries. Backlash, in the course of more than 20 years of self-organizing of the civilian, NGO sector in this country, is part of the “dance” between the public and NGO sector, which has fundamentally challenged all social values. This account aims to show how the “transitional” system of values stands in the way of establishing examples of good practices and what “patent” has been applied so far by a group of women in the protection of equity and promotion of equality of all citizens.

RECORDING DISCRIMINATION

or HOW SEXUALITY IS USED FOR ATTACKS AGAINST THE SELF-ORGANIZING OF WOMEN

The fascist forces are annoyed by the Srebrenica genocide

Case 1: Because of the persistent vigils of peace activist from the NGO sector on 10th July every year, in Republic Square in Belgrade, uncompromisingly denouncing the genocide of more than 8000 Bosnians in Srebrenica, the internet portals of ultra-rightist forces in Serbia have flared in hate talk. The authors are among the 50-odd activists targeted by these attacks, described by the fascists as lesbians, in a love relationship (Source: Portal of the Serbian nationalists, August 2004.; Portal the Serbian Internet Parliament, 9th July 2005).

Backlash: The vigils held by the activists because of the crime of Srebrenica have gained momentum after 2000, which is related to somewhat dubious motives and the fact that since 2000, the issue of the civic vs. the national option has been open. Besides, the gap between personal engagement of individuals from NGO-s and the political stance of respective organizations has become more conspicuous. It turned out that it was easy to integrate all that under Milošević and that this divide has acquired a legitimate status, in the sense “it can also be this way”.

Indicator 1: Even after 15 years since the atrocities were committed, Ratko Mladić has still not been arrested. The demand for his arrest was signed in June 2010 by merely 20-odd NGO-s, predominantly those who were not active in the 90's.

Indicator 2: To this day, none of the women NGO-s (who would by definition be expected to do so) have

systematically tackled the issue of war time rapes.

“Patent”: A war crime committed in the name of the citizens of Serbia remains a war crime. And nothing else.

Fascist forces attacks because of public and loud approval of lesbian human rights

Case 2: 30th June 2001; the authors were among the participants of the bloody Gay Pride who were attacked by the extremists at republic Square in Belgrade.

(Source: a) Video documentation of TV B92, TV Studio B and BK television of 30th June 2001, which is still being used as a testimony of that event; one of us was filmed in the most frequently presented report of the event; b) Medical documentation concerning injuries to an eye and spinal vertebrae of the second author date 30th June 2010, and subsequent medical reports due to long-term neurological problems that followed).

Case 3: 30th May 2005; Daily newspaper “Glas javnosti” publish on the front page a headline that said “When a gay person is an incest victims’ helper” alluding to the first author

(Source: Glas javnosti, 30th May 2005).

Several days prior to that event, two men, who had introduced themselves as journalists of the daily “Glas javnosti” and scheduled an appointment with us on our premises, appeared to be unusually hesitant and, when invited to start the interview on the agreed topic of sexual violence, continued to procrastinate before they finally uttered: “We’d been tipped off”. Considering this to be an inappropriate remark, she saw them out.

Case 4: In the summer months of 2007; Daily newspapers “Kurir”, “Press”, “Pravda” and “Glas javnosti”, at the time when the ITC repeatedly manifested its support to human rights NGO-s (the first author acting as the official spokesperson of the ITC policy of condemnation of war crimes), conduct orchestrated attacks against her. Those attacks were in the form of hate talk concerning her presumed sexual orientation and disputing her competence for work in the area of sexual trauma

(Source: Internet pages of the aforementioned daily newspapers in the summer months, including September 2007)

Case 5: 18th September 2007 – The official beginning of the ITC campaign against sexual violence “The Me Nobody Knows” was announced at a press conference before a packed full Belgrade Media Center. A man, who introduced himself as a journalist of the daily “Pravda” asked how it was possible “to be working in a lesbian agency, counseling service and deal with sexual violence in the Incest Trauma Center at the same time”

(Source: Video documentation of the ITC press conference, 18th September 2007).

The author confirmed her engagement as associate member of the local organization for lesbian human rights, which consists of the fact that, since 2003, she has developed and has been in charge of a psychological counseling service for lesbians and bisexual women (in the period 2003-2008 she provided psychological support to as many as 374 women). The reply also contained information that the ITC is aware of the phenomenon that its activities in the sphere of sexual trauma are being attacked every time it publicly advocates the condemnation of war crimes and the handing over of the indicted citizens of Serbia to the Tribunal in the Hague, or for the rights of the LGBT population, at which point a book dealing with precisely this phenomenon was presented. Our reply was endorsed by the deputy Minister of Health of RS, who, in the capacity of guest – presenter at the conference, confirmed that the Ministry of Health approved of the ITC activities. On the same day, the daily newspaper “Kurir” published a text that yet again promoted hate talk.

Backlash:

a) The aforementioned differentiation of (women) NGO-s according to the civic vs. national option is reflected in the practice of public advocacy for the equality of the LGBT population. It is important to keep one's distance and not run any risks.

b) The LGBT organizations in Serbia are aware of the fact that the ITC did not publicly support the holding of Gay Pride in 2009. The reason for this disagreement with the idea that the public should be animated exclusively through the initiative for holding the Gay Pride parade, which it does not essentially understand, instead of continually sensitizing the public to understanding the human rights of the LGBT population, and only after some visible progress has been achieved in this area, assessing the possibility of holding such a manifestation.

c) It is widely acknowledged that the ultra-rightist organizations in Serbia maintain close ties with the Serbian Orthodox Church.

In our response to the journalist of "Pravda" (case 5), we did not wish to lead to the confusion that the ITC trainer is part of the accredited program implemented by the organization "Čovekoljublje" of the SOC Fund, training religious teachers to work in violence prevention programs with secondary school students, but to make clear that the invitation of "Čovekoljublje" that we build our expertise into their program, accredited at the Ministry of Education of RS, came to the ITC after our public appeal for holding Bishop Pahomije responsible for sexual abuse of children.

d) A particular source of concern is the fact that the attacks of fascist forces against the author of the program "Insider" of TV B92 in December 2009, especially in the part of the most drastic threats with sexual violence – were not publicly denounced by any of the women NGO-s. It seems that a policy of "not upsetting the ultra-rightists" has become customary, which proved to be an effective mechanism of control over the women NGO-s who should be "always disobedient" instead of pursuing a "non-risk" policy. On that occasion, the ITC invited the author of the "Insider" to be our guest at the Press Club, which we moderated.

"Patent": When, the morning after the unsuccessful Gay Pride 2001, you appear at the regularly scheduled workshop with children and all of them show up along with a few "uninvited" parents, who just wanted to tell you they had been watching TV the previous day, that they "saw everything and were concerned and came to check that we were ok" – then you know for sure that you are perfectly well.

The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia is annoyed by our public support to lesbian human rights

Case 6: one of the two unpleasant situations that we recorded as experienced trainers who, over 16 years have trained 5,828 members of staff in 431 state institutions and NGO-s (¾ of whom were from state institutions), concerns the intervention of a public authorities' organ, the Ministry of Education of RS, in an instance when we assessed it was necessary to remove two participants from the training program for the representatives of 35 Belgrade primary schools in the school year 2005/2006. The training was conducted by the ITC, in partnership with the Ministry of Education (Letter of confirmation at www.incesttraumacentar.org.rs). The representatives of the Ministry also attended the six-day training, therefore this agency was fully informed about the program and its practical implementation. The trainers asked two participants (a man and a woman) to leave, because they had repeatedly laughed during our explanation of the warning signs with sexually abused children and ignored our requests to stop doing that.

During the training for the last group of participants, the authors received a telephone call from the Ministry of

Education, and they were asked to send a written explanation to the Chief of the Sector with which partnership was agreed in order prove that the complaint addressed to them was ungrounded. The (verbal) complaint had been submitted by the principal of the school employing the participants who had been taken off the course and it also contained the objection that, during the training sessions, we had been “handing out lesbian materials and leaflets”. Our reply to the Ministry official who called (and who had already attended the program herself), was that she was familiar with the content of the training through her own experience and that her complaint was therefore ungrounded. The fact that promotional educational material for human rights of all margin groups is placed on the walls of the ITC hall is a good way to spread information, and is by no means intended to take advantage of anyone. The official said that she was aware of that and that she felt embarrassed, but that she had been instructed to make the call... Launching this kind of complaint by telephone was chosen as a method because it leaves no record, i.e. it is difficult to prove. The same official called in October 2006 and said that it was “a good time for us to address the Ministry again if we wanted to carry out some activities, because the chief of the Sector had recently spoken well of the ITC in a meeting”. We did not address them.

Backlash: The understanding of the concept of partnership between the GO and NGO sector is liable to various interpretations in Serbia. In this case, it is important to mention additional information – that the ITC attracted a foreign donor and invested financial means from its grant. The partner’s contribution consisted of designating the schools and participants, and not through financing.

“Patent”: Endorsing our own principles and values.

A foreign embassy – donor minds our seeking of accountability of Bishop Pahomije

Case 7: As part of the final report of a particularly successful ITC project, in the rubric entitled Unexpected results/outcomes”, the authors quoted a total of seven items as original, future activities, anticipated on the grounds of acquired experience in the ongoing project. It was emphasized that the ITC would conduct these activities with its own financial means and that the current donor institution did not have any financial responsibility concerning the planned items. Item 5 referred to continually reminding the public of the unproved accountability of SOC Bishop Pahomije for child sexual abuse. A new instrument of prevention of child sexual abuse had been planned, coupled with an appeal to the public, especially the professional public, about the need for amending the law in the parts that refer to the Statute of Limitations for sexual offences. The monitoring officer of the donor’s organization called the author of this text by telephone in order to point to the fact that a correction of “item 5 from the final report should be made, because he is a simple monk, and not a bishop”. We sent them the history of the legal aspect of the case, which explicitly indicates that this objection was not correct, because we thought that perhaps they did not have all the information. Two more telephone calls followed from the communication officer of the donor institution, who reiterated the same request. Besides, we were told that “the final report could not be approved” unless we complied. Making such an accusation and placing such a request by telephone was chosen as a method that does not leave any record, i.e. is difficult to prove. It is just our word against theirs. It is the same kind of demonstration of power as in case of a sexual offence – no witnesses, therefore the weaker side lose their argument.

Backlash: Do you know of an NGO in Serbia that publicly complained about a foreign donor?

“Patent”: Do what you consider is right, even at the cost of being denied the last part of the grant, and then go public. There is no other choice.

The 90's or "WHAT WILL NOT BE INCLUDED IN THIS NARRATIVE"

This narrative will not include a detailed account of situations that could be described as survived xenophobia and the police exceeding their mandate towards the authors and their families:

- The second ever removal of a participant in the training program, organized in 1998 for the Belgrade homes for children without parental care, who systematically blocked activities related to the topic of child sexual abuse by intruding with questions about the ITC sources of financing. Having answered his question the first time and after his third interruption, the training session was interrupted and a break was made, during which the group was asked to decide between continuing without their colleague or discontinuing the training session altogether. This move was also approved of by the Home governor.

- For 13 days during the NATO intervention in 1999: a) the authors were requested by the Police to report daily to the local police station, b) regular daily visits of uniformed police officers to ITC, (sometimes even twice a day) in order to check "the situation" on the premises c) the ITC being visited by a member of the former DB (State Security) – which has now been transformed into BIA (Security and Information Agency) and being subject to interrogation for informative purposes by him – all this was accounted for as necessary check-up. For 13 days during the bombing, ITC opened its doors as a shelter for the children who had already been traumatized by the war in Bosnia and Croatia and who had been involved in our War Trauma Program for a longer period of time (a parallel ITC program for children in the period 1995-2002). The parents of 11 children entrusted their 5 to 16-year-old children to us, to provide them with shelter in ITC. The part of Belgrade where their collective center was located used to be a constant target of attacks, and they did not have any relatives in Serbia who could take care of them.

- A text message to a family member of one of the authors, sent by the mobile phone operator, not to "exchange rude messages about our president" (i.e. Slobodan Milošević, authors' remark). This person had been exchanging text messages with a friend and had jokingly said, "Sloba is going to lose". She responded with a message saying that "Infringing upon someone's privacy is not allowed" So much about the newly adopted Law on Electronic Communications of 2010!

- Inspecting the (family) background of the authors of this narrative by the officials of the Ministry of the Interior with the aim of starting cooperation at a later time, namely, after the changes of 2000. It is our conclusion that, on the whole, we "passed the test": "The passing mark" and the authorities' decision were established by weighing out and assessing facts, among which was the kidnapping of a family member of one of the authors (namely, a journalist of the magazine "Vreme", in 1993., who was set free on the motorway by the former DB, (now BIA)) a few days later, and a "quite appropriate" communist past and a number of relatives employed by the Police in the family of the other.

- The apprehension of one of the authors for an informative interview, which was conducted in a popular Belgrade restaurant by an officer of the former DB (now BIA), because of her personal engagement in the Belgrade Anti-War Center as of 1989 and the early 90's.

Backlash: All this is backlash against common sense.

"Patent": Show your potentials at work and the so-called power ministries, the presumably most closed systems, can open up! A recognized expertise in practice in the sphere of the social problem of sexual violence: ITC is the first women NGO in Serbia that, immediately after the political changes, i.e. in 2001, in partnership with the Ministry of Interior Affairs, embarked on a three-year training program for police staff from 11 cities, ranging

from officers in uniform to police schools; 2. Since 2005, the ITC has maintained partnership with the Ministry of Justice, which is predominantly effectuated in trainings for the staff of penitentiary institutions for women and minors.

THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The recommendations for gender sensitive implementation of EU guidelines of human rights defenders have not reached the public agenda yet. It is a long-standing European document aimed at reminding the social actors of their obligation to protect human rights defenders. Who are we to seek protection from, when this category is in itself not recognized in the law of the Republic of Serbia?

Furthermore, this narrative does not include any elaboration of the experiences that can colloquially be referred to as “standard practice” when you work on the problem of sexual violence as an NGO expert and:

- When you appear in court, as an expert witness during criminal procedures, you confront sentences, stereotypes, discrimination and the disputing of your own competence, and also of your statement based on direct work, i.e. psychological assistance for a sexually abused child;

- When, acting as an expert witness in court, you do not consider it relevant to answer a question about your marital status and number of children you (possibly) have, and when a witness appears after you saying that she is married and a mother of three, you experience a round of applause in the courtroom!

- When it is arranged that you do not receive a summons for a Panel of experts appointed by the court, because you are the only professional to whom the child disclosed sexual abuse (and the defendant is a family member of a respectable colleague of medical profession); and the court sends you a warning letter, threatening you with an enormous fine for failing to fulfill an obligation you were not timely informed about.

- When daily politics interferes with a case of child sexual abuse, together with the political options interested in deploying their personnel; and when you are expected to issue a “certificate” that sexual abuse took place. And you do not comply, because you are an independent agency and you did not recognize signs and /or effects of sexual abuse with the child in question.

- When you struggle to reach your own “public” service, RTS and have them show the ITC film “The news is I’ve been abused”, based on our clients’ genuine testimonies, for which the Ministry for Social Policy awarded us “for a particular contribution in the sphere of public awareness raising about the condemnation of sexual and gender based violence”. So far, the award conferred by a state institution has not been of any help. The reason for close doors: unknown.

Backlash: The difficulties in putting the human rights defenders on the public agenda have been encouraged and reinforced by the “dance” between the public and the (women’s) NGO sector or the dynamics within each of them:

- Did you know that even the topic of the social position of human rights defenders can be monopolized, understood as a “reserved territory”, while those who are allowed to enter the “territory” become a pseudo-elite? Yet another project, a new source of money?
- The state organs and the political parties are familiar with the situation within the NGO sector, that,

unfortunately, it lacks authentic ties and mutual reliability and that it is marked by interpersonal dynamics.

- The political parties take advantage of the weak or fledgling movements of marginal social groups – vulnerability as a precondition and liability to oppression – for their own aims such as obtaining support for positioning a certain political party, replacing one set of personnel with another within the same party, etc.
- NGOs have to learn to build their own analytical capacity (from group dynamics processes to learning from the experiences of other countries and better understanding of processes in this sphere).
- Avoiding “success formulae” – being caught in a triangle: political party – the media – NGO
- The confusion of NGO about its place and role in the system:
 - a) Are you here in order to be as close as possible to the state? (distorted understanding of the concept of “partnership” of GO and NGO)
 - b) On the ambition of “crossing” into the state sector, which is often defined by the very time of beginning NGO engagement and the its motive – and how possible that contribution is if ambition is not fulfilled over time, e.g. because formal requirements for a certain post are not fulfilled.
 - c) When to support a specific political party? (distorted understanding of the concept of lobbying, instead of preserving autonomy).
 - d) Can individuals and NGO’s position themselves adequately without entering or supporting a certain political party?
 - e) It is said: “NGO serves exclusively to criticize the state” (while the state surreptitiously woos them, so as to position itself “as well as possible” – whatever this means!)
 - f) Not “buying” the instructions of renowned marketing agencies that doors can be opened “exclusively through personal contact” – self-organizing of citizens is being established in order to bring about systematic changes, and not in order to develop personal acquaintances and be attractive or not to someone.
 - g) “Homo homini lupus est” (and “NGO” can stand instead of “man”): If you have a different opinion, you may be censored or come up against various walls: blocking the channel of information, less money, maliciousness, etc.

- In most cases, it turns out that all those who are dedicated to human rights in practice are alone when exposed to attacks (even if part of the “clique”)

- The state of Serbia considers these issues only when it has to or has a vested interests there.

- It is difficult to recognize when praising and awards between the GO and NGO sector are the result of an authentic motive, but you should be able to genuinely praise others.

“Patent”: Be brave. Be wise and persistent in seeking that the position of human right defenders become an unavoidable political issue.

THERE IS ONLY ONE CONCLUSION
– INTEGRITY or WHATEVER YOU DO, DO NOT KEEP SILENT – SPEAK OUT PUBLICLY!

The most efficient response to all kinds of threats and attacks against progressive citizens and groups is not keeping silent – **SPEAK OUT PUBLICLY!** This is one of the aims of this narrative.

It is always easy and sometimes also difficult to demonstrate personal integrity as part of your personal ID when you work in the field of sexual trauma in Serbia. It is easy because the basic values are unchanged and have no alternative. It is easy because every minute, you know for whom you work – for real children who have survived sexual trauma. In this “jungle” of values, brought to us or taken away by transition, the most important thing is never to forget why and for whom you have decided to work in the field you opted for. On the other side, there is only a complicated social and political context and (other) adverse circumstances. It becomes hard when a lot of your energy is drained by what is referred to as “challenges” in politically correct terms, which are actually attacks against the basic values you stand for. It is difficult, because then you have less time to rejoice at things that you have managed to move slightly forward or to see clearly which “mountains you want to move” in your next step. However, the difficulties are soon over and you keep moving mountains further and further.

CHAPTER 1

IDENTITY AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PIONEERING STAGE OF ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Where does policy in fact begin?

When it comes to Incest Trauma Center - Belgrade (ITC), we believe that our policy was created with the very decision that we want to establish an organisation. At that time, in January 1994, the law required ten persons to agree on the establishment. Most of us who founded ITC had met four months before at a training for volunteers of the Belgrade SOS crisis line for women and child victims of violence, which had been in operation for the previous three and a half years as the first official service in our country against male violence against women. As such, it had always been an indescribably important place for all its members. We all came with an open heart.

We who founded ITC learned two things soon after joining the SOS crisis line:

1. That it is necessary to acquire specialised knowledge on the topic of sexual violence, because brave women reported their experiences of sexual trauma
2. That we want to start work in this area within a separate, specialised service.

We learned the latter the hard way. We disagreed with the inward-looking existing policy, focused on the members themselves, and with organisational development. Several of us stayed on to volunteer for a few more years with the Belgrade SOS crisis line, without participating in organisational meetings, with intervision exchanges about cases. With regard to the types of cases most frequently reported, we mostly gained knowledge and experience about working directly with women survivors of domestic violence, first of all, violence in partner relationship, and how this situation affected their children. For the next six years, the authors of this publication were the trainers at most of the new annual SOS crisis line training programmes.

It was a time when women's organisations were part of the anti-war movement in Serbia, in the context of the wars in the former Yugoslavia, and we continued to share that policy with the SOS crisis line and other women's organisations that existed in the 1990ies.

In 1994, we started building our organisation, Incest Trauma Center - Belgrade, based on our policy. Policy begins with the decision to establish an organisation, with its name. Our name was chosen exactly as it reads, so that it would break the taboo by itself whenever it is said.

Our full name is Incest Trauma Center - Belgrade.

INCEST - sexual abuse of a child by an adult who has power, authority over the child, and has the child's trust. This trust is built carefully, with the intention of abusing it. The offender is usually a person known to the child. The child is most often sexually abused within the family. Here we are also going the hard way, to the core of the taboo.

TRAUMA - a normal reaction to abnormal circumstances. A healthy reaction to unhealthy circumstances, that is trauma. We are here to take care of trauma and recovery. We work in a social context; we are helpers in a social context. That is extremely important to us, one of our core values.

CENTER - our intention was to become a specialised service, with an abundance of knowledge, easily accessible to

each survivor of sexual violence. We wanted to become a Resource Centre, in many ways: for the citizens, for the professional community that we want to bring together in the common process of learning about sexual trauma.

BELGRADE - the seat of our organisation is in Belgrade. It is not the same to work in Belgrade or in another city on the planet. The city and the country are part of our diversity in relation to similar organisations in Europe and the world.

We wanted to change the world, and we made that decision. We decided to do it together. We were very different from each other. Completely different life paths. Different age, education, ethnicity, with and without a personal history of violence, each one aware of the recognised personal experience of discrimination in society because of being a woman. For the president, who is responsible before the government for the organisation as a legal entity, we chose one of the three youngest of us, and she remained in that position for the next ten years. She had only one successor to this day - as individuals we are not inclined to chase after that kind of power (it has remained so to this day). At the time of establishing the organisation, we voted for the second youngest member to lead our team operationally in terms of the programme, so she became the youngest leader of a women's organisation at the time. At that point, she already knew more about the issue of sexual violence than any of us. A woman with disability wrote the ITC Statute; she had more skills to do it than any of us.

We have become a feminist organisation centred on child and adult survivors of sexual violence and promoting the perspective of recovery from sexual trauma. **Our position is that as long as there is sexual violence against women, there will be no gender equality.**

SELF-ORGANISATION OF WOMEN

Professional and private level

In many cases around the world, women's self-organisation began with friendship intertwined with the challenges of work. Because changing the world in a women's organisation over time becomes a task to which you are fully committed. You love your job and, because of that love, it often does not feel like being at work. That is the feeling with which we embarked upon this endeavour and it still is.

Women's self-organisation raises the issue of intertwined private and professional relationships among the members of the organisation. Sometimes it is an organisational strength, because mutual familiarity and understanding can be a value added. When we do not monitor this process carefully, by taking care of personal and professional boundaries that enable and ensure smooth operation, it can become an organisational weakness. We spent countless hours of supervision in the first decade of our work discussing how important it is to build unwavering professionalism, while preserving the value of private relationships. And we learned how to act when we fail to be both colleagues and friends. We also learned how to monitor the Founder's Syndrome phenomenon. All that helped us. The specificity of ITC is that the founders did not privately know each other previously, but when you change the world together - you share the same values and establish invaluable closeness, which is part of the driving force for change.

Woman as both expert and activist

A door was opened to another phenomenon in that pioneering era, and that is how to reconcile co-existing activist identity and the identity of a specialised, professional, highly profiled service, specifically in the same persons. Our professions are in the field of mental health, and the condition for working in ITC is direct work with survivors

of sexual violence. In the culture in which we live, it is not yet quite common to step out of the comfort zone of various desirable professions and engage in activism, especially street activism. This also applies to professionals in the field of psychology and psychiatry. It can be said that “on both sides” there may be resistance, both on the side of activists and on the side of “professionals”. We have always lived the combined identities of experts and activists in one person. To this day, we look for that when it comes to the ITC membership. Even today, women’s organisations have a task of recognising that professionalisation is not antagonist to activism (it is not its “enemy”).

If these intertwined identities and interpersonal relationships are not the focus of open conversation at certain times, difficulties may arise.

Personal history of organisation members that involves sexual violence or other traumatic experience

Personal history of violence or some other traumatic experience: In our team, the rule has always been that members openly exchange personal history with each other, because they understand that this is one of the prerequisites for quality teamwork. We are here as helpers for the people who approach us, but it is also important to be there for each other. Personal histories become part of team dynamics. It is important that other members of your team are aware that you may need their help in some situations at work. That is why it is important to share your experience so that the need you have is recognised in a timely manner.

Emotional component: sexual violence is a topic that triggers various emotional reactions. Although it has been our regular work for many years, we consider the feelings we recognise and share within the team to be a sign of our health. Teamwork unites our diversities, which are expressed on several levels and represent a wealth of approaches and repertoire of our team. Sometimes they involve additional vulnerability. How are you as a helper affected by the experience of survivors of sexual violence who contact the organisation? Is it ever overwhelming, and in what ways does it affect you? How do you deal with that? Do you know what you need from other team members at that time?

In the past, a dilemma was raised among supervisory questions about what to do if a person who approached us as a client directly asks us if we have had personal experience of (sexual) violence. Although this has not actually happened in reality during all these years, we have always had that decision and been ready for an honest answer, bearing in mind that the key consideration is the context, i.e. the existence of a purely therapeutic purpose.

Another context in which we have considered how communicating the personal history of helpers must be appropriate is during the training of new members. The current team is a role model for new members and is responsible for constantly reinforcing the organisational climate of safe disclosure of personal history and care provided after the disclosure. Because if you expect that from clients, it must first be established within the team.

Pearl: Survivors-led organisations working with survivors

It is not unheard of that individuals who choose helper professions have often themselves had a traumatic experience in their lives. When a person is committed to working on recovery, a personal history that includes any traumatic experience makes this person stronger and, paradoxically, prepares a person for different complex life situations.

Sometimes this capacity distinguished this person positively in relation to people who do not have a traumatic experience. In other words, it can also be an advantage – if she knows her experience not only in an experienced but also systemic manner, which means that she has the knowledge of how to understand it and to manage it in her future life.

In societies with a low level of awareness of the issue of sexual violence, such as ours, the decision to reveal to the public the identity of (a) member(s) of the organisation who experienced sexual violence may have different repercussions. This can be done in a clearly defined context in order to be appropriate for the public and, at the same time, safe for the person, as well as the organisation. In different societies, where the level of awareness of appreciation and celebration of different identities is high, persons with precious life experiences become role models for others who have similar experiences, or the general public, which becomes motivated to develop empathy and appreciate the courage of making personal experience public. In a country like ours, both twenty-eight years ago and unfortunately today, the conditions for the safe disclosure of personal history of sexual violence and the continuation of safe public daily life in this identity, have not been met. At the same time, thought is given to the fact that the organisation is becoming a model in the field of dealing with sexual violence over time and is engaged in public work, motivating citizens to share their experience, while individual members keep their experiences to themselves. For example, the media are not allies regarding this issue. Our discussions within the organisation have had one common denominator, which is that our engagement in this work has been too serious, committed and long for us to become a topic of sensationalised news. We have never been that. Therefore, weighing arguments for and against involves careful consideration of whether the reaction of the public will keep the interest in the work of the organisation on the issue or on the person. That is why we have decided to do everything we can to ensure that the organisation's quality work keeps the attention of the public on the issue of sexual violence. As for all the other issues we raise in this publication, there is no formula, no recipe - only responsible reflection and assessment in certain time periods, from which we learn.

Finance

We have been concerned about how to achieve the financial sustainability of the organisation, how the members who have to do two jobs (besides their regular job, they work in ITC) will deploy their energy and time, which positions are paid how much, what about unpaid positions and tasks, how to avoid sending a negative message about the unwritten job hierarchy. Which team members depend on income they only receive in ITC? How do we ensure that ITC space becomes child-friendly when we rent premises, will we manage to provide its continuous financing? To the public, it may sound incredible, but for the first twenty-two years, our ***Team for Child and Adult Survivors of Sexual Violence*** worked without the budget for psychological assistance services which are the ITC calling card. Certainly, we continue to bear the deepest regret that we did not have the funds to employ full time a host of young women who had worked for us (as a group that we selected in the same period of time). Each of them was infinitely talented for direct service provision in the field of trauma, as much as we were eager to teach them all. There are a number of obstacles to raising funds for direct work with child and women survivors of sexual violence, as direct service provision is not a priority for donors. Hardiness, resilience and the value system (i.e. honesty) are key factors of our sustainability.

To date, we have remained a low-budget organisation, whose results visibly disproportionately exceed the financial resources available to us so far. We have also learned that it does not belong to us as individuals to discuss financial concerns outside ITC. We believe in ourselves and we have been continuously investing efforts in creating better times.

Conclusion

Being a member of ITC is an important part of identity of each of us. Sometimes it seems to us that a huge part of our work has been reflection and decision-making. Among the main decisions was certainly the organisation's crystal clear mandate, fully focused on the field of sexual violence. In addition, we have invested in defining priorities, because we are a small organisation in which ten women, contributing full- or part-time, a maximum of 34 volunteers, with their stable, continuous participation, are supposed to cover the entire workload. Over time, we were joined, at various times, by seventeen youngsters of age 11-18 in our ***Peer Team against Sexual Violence***. Caring for the team's cohesion is crucial.

We set up a clear organisational structure and built ITC with its three permanent identities: Crisis Intervention Center, Training Center and Sexual Violence Prevention Center. Based on our understanding of the social context, in the 1995-2003 period, apart from the core ***Sexual Trauma Programme***, we established and ran in parallel the ***War Trauma Programme*** for children and women who were affected by the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Kosovo, and forced to flee war-torn areas and move to Serbia. We publicly stated that Serbia played the role of the aggressor in all the wars of the 90ies.

Finally, although with the lapse of time, the trends of "historic forgetfulness" emerge in the areas in which women's organisations are active, it is up to women's organisations to preserve institutional memory. Because no one will do it for them or instead of them. Quite the contrary. Women's work is most often invisible, and easily erased by the majority in society, including in the field of sexual violence against women and children. The results of women's organisations are often appropriated, or deleted in a different manner, when "the world starts over" as if there had never been any women's work. And the truth is the following: if it had not been for women's organisations, there would be no foundation or development in the field of violence against women and children.

This paper is essentially an attempt to preserve institutional memory and pass on lessons learned, which we hope you will find useful.

CHAPTER 2

OUR HEART IS ON THE SIDE OF RECOVERY FROM SEXUAL TRAUMA

We have decided that all ITC programme activities will be in the service of child and adult survivors of sexual violence. That all our thoughts and actions will be centred on children and women who have experienced sexual violence, because in practice, it is mostly women that are those adults exposed to sexual violence. That all planning will be guided by the best interest of children, women and all adults facing sexual trauma. That they will be our permanent advisers, do a number of activities together with us and tell us if we succeeded in terms of results.

We decided that the work in the field of sexual violence will be our life's calling and call for action to the society in which we live. We knew that our decision was essentially a decision against intent and constant cruelty of the offender. We were aware that highly specialised knowledge, high vigilance, comprehensive approach, lack of prejudice, connections in the country and internationally were required. We knew that the key responsibility for the ethics of the organisation rested with us as individuals. From the beginning to date, we have been responsible for the organisational culture and for the quality of services to child and adult survivors of sexual violence. It will remain so forever.

The three most important components in the work on violence against women and children and sexual violence (including intervention and prevention):

1. Work should be centred on the child/adult who experienced the trauma.
2. Work must demonstrate sensitivity to and respect for diversity – recognising own prejudices and eliminating them from own work.
3. Emotional component – full attention must be focused on the fact that the issue itself causes different emotions to which none of the actors involved are immune and which affect the quality of work.

We decided to organise our work in the following forms for our clients (children, adolescents and adults):

1. Counselling (crisis, short- and long-term):
 - a) crisis line
 - b) 1 on 1 i.e. individual sessions;
 - c) support groups for children, adolescents and adult women survivors of sexual violence (organised by age, with a special care for concrete experience);
 - d) preparation for court for the purposes of criminal proceedings;
 - e) accompanying survivors to the court during criminal proceedings as psychological support;
 - f) counselling for persons who are allies/support persons of a child/adult survivor (most often in practice, for children it is the mother, as the non-violent parent, and the grandmother, and for adolescents and adults, it is the partner, etc.).
2. Legal advice and representation of children/adult survivors by our female lawyers during criminal proceedings.
3. Court appearance of the head of our **Team for Child and Adults Survivors of Sexual Violence** as an expert witness who represents the Team's professional opinion delivered in writing at the request of

the court following the psychological assistance provided.

4. Psychosocial support: connecting the child/adult survivor, upon their request, with other actors in the support system for survivors of sexual violence and in the community.

Where, how and from whom did we learn about sexual violence?

There is no source of learning about the field of sexual violence in our country to date. Over time, ITC has become a resource for government institutions and NGOs, which, through its Training Center, conducts different forms of training programmes for different profiles and issues attendance certificates. To be able to do this, for years we have, in parallel, been learning and working with children/adults, from whom we have learned the most. Original professions are not enough. Unfortunately, in the course of education, the issue of sexual violence is not taught enough, or is not taught at all. The topic is not included in the national curriculum. We acquired knowledge during several weeks each of study visits to the Netherlands, U.S., Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, United Kingdom. We were also trained by foreign female trainers of different profiles that came to our country to conduct training cycles. Last, but not least, we have included in the regular job description of each member of the organisation an obligation of self-education on a weekly basis and reporting to the Team on the knowledge acquired. For example, during the first five years of the ITC's operation, every Sunday afternoon from 4 to 8 p.m, we went to our premises and shared with each other the new things we had, in the meantime, read in foreign professional literature, discussed it intensively and took a joint position at the organisation level.

Our view from the beginning has been that it is necessary to first master very well the issue of domestic violence as a whole (emotional, physical, sexual and economic violence against women and children), then to learn specifically about the issue of sexual violence and then sexual abuse of children. Thus, expertise in the field of sexual violence means that we are extremely familiar with working on emotional, physical and economic violence. Over time, it became apparent that to ITC it was most frequently reported sexual abuse of children in the family, and we have been constantly building up our knowledge in that sub-field. The cases of sexual violence against women who experienced it in childhood and adult life, were the next most frequently reported.

What knowledge about the topic of sexual violence is a must?

Today we can say that continuous knowledge acquisition in ITC is a process that best matches the learning model proposed by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) from U.K. This globally renowned organisation, whose efforts are focused on prevention and protection of children from violence, has methodologically proposed the monitoring of individual and organisational development in the area of acquisition of competence through at least three instruments:

- At regular time intervals, monitor and analyse personal learning style (through 40 Item Questionnaire¹), familiarity with adult learning principles and learning cycles
- Analysis of Competence
- Competences and Evidence Guidance

Note: More about the usefulness of these instruments available at: Meeting International Standard of Competency in Child Protection Training; for Trainers Active in the Field of Sexual Assault (2017©Incest Trauma Center - Belgrade, Serbia)

1 *2010©Peter Honey Publications; The Learning Styles Questionnaire, 40-item version.

We will only address the basic areas² that must be mastered if you wish to work properly with children/adults:

- The issue of male violence against women and children (emotional, physical, sexual and economic violence)
- Fundamentals of feminist theory and application in direct work in the field of trauma
- Diversity issues, understanding the dynamics of oppression, recognising hate crimes
- Being a helper in the social context, building repertoire/capacity of transcultural helpers
- The emotional component and issues faced by helpers while learning about the issue of sexual violence and working in this area
- Sexual violence against women and children, trauma and sexual trauma
- Characteristics and dynamics of recovery in cases of sexual violence
- Legal aspect and prosecution of cases of sexual violence
- Direct service provision: in-depth understanding of sexual trauma and recovery after sexual violence, helper-client relationship (including power disbalance, transference and countertransference, barriers in work and limitations of helpers), interviewing techniques, therapy issues, individual and group work (familiarity with group dynamic processes, especially self-help group method), working with different age groups, etc.
- Vicarious trauma and helpers' care of their own mental health
- Other topics.

Note: As part of our Training Center identity, our Team Leader has U.K. certification and accreditation for the provision of specialist training services and certification for the provision of supervision services. It is one of the particular directions of our competences.

Competencies are crucial. It is always important to ask oneself: do I possess the latest, current knowledge and skills in the field of sexual violence?

Quality of work with clients is of the utmost importance to us. We ensure the quality of our work through:

- Intervention
- Supervision
- Recording and documenting reported cases
- Analysis we regularly present to the public in the form of annual and five-year reviews.

We have had supervision since the very beginning, because our position is that working with people who have suffered a trauma is not possible without supervision. Working under supervision indicates that the subject of supervision is:

- Content of the work on reported cases (case management), including the drafting of an action plan/ steps in resolving the case – but also a special review of the process of the helper, who is an expert with personal history, personal capacity and repertoire and personal working style.

² Each of the stated areas comprises a long list of topics; for the purposes of this text, which is focused primarily on organisational development, the areas are designated in general terms.

- Organisational issues – i.e. the development of specialised, crisis service against sexual violence. The development of the service is a vital subject of supervision, as it has a key impact on the direct work on reported cases (ethics, working conditions, communication lines).

As part of the content of work with child/adult survivors, it is of paramount importance to review constantly:

- The helpers' skills
- Case conceptualisation
- The helpers' professional role and its boundaries
- Emotional sensitivity of the helper towards a child/adult survivor of sexual violence and for herself
- Self-evaluation as a helper

Who did we trust to supervise us?

It is not easy to identify a quality supervisor for the needs of a specialised service against sexual violence and establish long-term co-operation. An integral part of our organisational structure is:

a) Daily supervision by a supervisor who is part of the ***Team for Child and Adult Survivors of Sexual Violence***. In our organisation, part of the policy is to have a person in this position who, in addition to specialised knowledge in the field of sexual violence and supervision certification, has a personal history of sexual violence.

b) Supervision by a supervisor from foreign professional support (4 psychotherapists from the Netherlands) as follows:

- Team supervision at regular intervals, once every three months for three days. In addition, there is a possibility of scheduling additional time slots for the Team I and one-on-one supervision sessions if needed.
- *Live* supervision, which is methodologically conducted by having the supervisor attend a session that the helper has with a client and: **a)** after the session, provide feedback to the helper or **b)** during the session, make a cut and intervene, after which the session continues, with the suggestion taken on board. *Live* supervision requires a high level of the client's trust built towards her helper and organisation as a whole and advance preparation of all sides with crystal clear explanations and instructions that the method is used in order to achieve in-depth improvement of the quality of work with clients. One of the specificities of our process of established trust is that *live* supervision was most often conducted with interpretation to and from English. Already during the intake interview with our clients, we always provide information that ITC is an organisation in which one of the pillars of development is the helpers' learning for the purpose of improving direct work and that one of the learning processes may be proposed during their counselling sessions, to which the clients can independently decide to consent in writing or not.

For us in ITC, supervision has always been a priceless learning process, which is always welcome in an organisation that has always developed a culture of learning as its priority. Our experience shows that supervision is a powerful form of support for the team. This is not control or oversight, which is imprinted in the culture of our country and Eastern European countries as the meaning of this word. Supervision is help provided in monitoring the quality of work, alliance and help in evaluating the work. This is a process that rules out the possibility of a supervisor making decisions in an organisation. Her interest is to be useful to the helpers in achieving the high quality of their work in the field of trauma. A supervisor is a team player with a clear helping role in the team.

Recording cases of sexual violence

Every case reported to us online, by phone or during face-to-face meetings (1 on 1 sessions and support groups) is recorded in our service database. The next step is an assessment for which cases we have, for how many parameters, complete data, given the total number of parameters we track. The importance of the database is that case data collection, processing and analysis where we have complete data represent actually “going out into the world” of the child and adult survivors of sexual violence. The systematisation and analytical report we issue on an annual and five-year basis contribute to ensuring that the world better understands persons who cope with sexual trauma.

The world consists of:

- Citizens (meaning general public)
- Professional community – including the professional community of different profiles directly responsible for the protection and prevention system – then different policy makers and decision makers (including politicians), and finally, donors.

Statistical data inform the activities of each of the target groups listed. <http://incestraumacentar.org.rs/index.php/statistike/>

Documenting cases of sexual violence

The case of each person who contacted ITC is carefully and thoroughly documented. Each file includes the complete documentation regarding the person’s trauma and recovery. The files are stored outside the ITC premises, and are not located in any computer.

Together with the recording, by documenting, material that is a rich resource is built. It can provide insight into how helpers provide psychological assistance to child and adult survivors of sexual violence, what we have learned about sexual trauma and recovery.

Note: In the 1995-2003 period we worked with children from war-torn regions of the former Yugoslavia, and after the completion of our War Trauma Programme, we also collected the complete material by documenting each case.

Building the ITC infrastructure as a support system for our direct service provision to child/adult survivors

No institution or organisation active in the field of sexual violence can on its own fulfil the best practice goal.

How to identify reliable allies (other institutions and organisations and individuals)?

The most important thing is to:

1. Understand properly one's place in the support system for child and adult survivors of sexual violence (in case of ITC, the place of women's non-governmental service in the field of sexual violence).
2. Fulfil one's mandate persistently and precisely (not to exceed the mandate (or not to extend the mandate), implementing the organisation's mission because of issues that are a priority at a given point in time, of, for example, donors)
3. Build one's own infrastructure that will facilitate the work of the organisation's helpers.

Referring clients to another institution, organisation and professional requires responsibility. We do not refer clients to any address, unless we know from other clients what the quality of work is at that place. What clients tell us is the most reliable source of information.

Another reliable source of information are the activities of our Training Center, namely the fact that we have met many colleagues from different sectors by training or supervising them, or providing support to them in their work as advisors. This is also a way to get to know someone's values and quality of work and decide whether to trust that person with a client who has put trust in your organisation.

The third source is you: the guaranteed minimum is not to refer a client to a place where you would not go if you were a survivor of sexual violence. Or a place where you would not take your child.

What makes for successful co-operation?

There are three conditions:

1. Harmonised, complementary, highly professional knowledge in the area of violence against women and children.
2. Identical attitudes reflecting and advocating for the best interest of women and children who experienced violence.
3. Culture of communication among government institutions, NGOs and the private sector.

Although that sounds paradoxical, by comparing these three conditions, our experience shows that the simplest way is to upgrade knowledge. It is harder to build successful communication among institutions and organisations, as it is often burdened with mutual prejudice and dynamics caused by an unwritten hierarchy of sectors and professions. However, the most difficult, sometimes elusive task is to reach fundamentally the same positions/attitudes that reflect the proper understanding of trauma and recovery, and place them in a social context where gender roles, diversity and human rights are central issues.

The example of the Network of Trust

In 2001, after political changes in the Republic of Serbia, the ITC initiated the establishment of the first multidisciplinary team, which, by official signatures of the management, brought together key government institutions and NGOs responsible for the protection of women and children from domestic violence and sexual violence, under the name of institutions/organisations came up with - the Network of Trust against Gender-based Violence. In the 2001-2007 period, ITC coordinated this system. It was commonly referred to as *the Network of Trust*. It was composed of practitioners employed with specialised departments for children and adolescents in three health clinics, two units of the Police Department of the City of Belgrade: Sexual Crimes Section of the

Violent and Sexual Crime Unit, as well as the Juvenile Delinquency Unit (the Belgrade police then covered 70% of crime in the Republic of Serbia), all seven homes for children without parental care in the territory of Belgrade, women NGOs providing shelter services to abused women and those whose leaders belonged to marginalised social groups and whose organisations worked with these groups (Roma women, women with disabilities and women of lesbian and bisexual orientation). *The Network of Trust* established its Section of Employees in Centres for Social Work and the Section of Prosecutors. The basic requirement to join *the Network of Trust* was to be, in your regular job, direct service provider to childr and/or adult survivors of emotional, physical, sexual and economic violence. The operating model of the Network of Trust was established and implemented in three cities: Belgrade, Subotica and Kruševac. After 2007, *the Network of Trust* continued to live its life by continuing to work together on reported cases. When necessary, everyone knew how to switch on the mechanism of action that was centrally focused on the interest of the child and adult exposed to violence.

Complementary examples

The Network of Trust is one source on which our *Team for Child and Adults Survivors of Sexual Violence* has been relying to this day. In addition, through the training cycles, we established the Section of Employees in the Field of Mental Health and, within it, the Directory of colleagues from government institutions (mostly psychiatrists) and private practices (mostly psychologists). We jointly assessed precisely what service they could most optimally provide in the support system that we all form (e.g. recognition of psychopathology, placement in case hospitalisation is required, assistance in studying in the student population, etc.) In particular, we have continuous cooperation with a private sector gynaecological practice where clients receive assistance when they contact us in the acute situation of sexual violence, and often remain with it for the purpose of regular check-ups. Finally, five law offices have cooperated with us so far both by providing legal advice and client representation in criminal proceedings and for the purposes of ITC as an organisation. With all those who operate in the private sector, an agreement has been reached on very favourable rates for services which are covered by ITC in all acute situations. In addition, everyone making up the ITC infrastructure contributes with a significant number of volunteer working hours.

By gradually developing the focus on our identity as the Center for the Prevention of Sexual Violence, we have also developed our infrastructure of education employees, who have become an invaluable resource for intervention and prevention of sexual violence benefiting children in the (pre)school system. In 2017, ITC promoted this resource to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia under the official name of the National Network of Schools and Kindergartens against Sexual Violence.

VICARIOUS TRAUMA

The chapter on direct service provision to children and adults who experienced trauma would not be complete without pointing out, at least briefly, the importance of training members of the organisation in the field of vicarious trauma.

All individuals and organisations demonstrate courage and bravery in their work in the best interest of child and adult survivors of sexual violence. It is the same with individuals and organisations working with persons who have had any other traumatic experience. This decision represents dedication and commitment to give a contribution in the field of trauma despite the personal, physical, emotional and mental toll.

Exposure to the traumatic experience of other people is called vicarious trauma. Vicarious trauma is an integral

part of professional challenges in providing services to persons who cope with trauma. Organisations can build readiness to deal with potentially negative effects of exposure to trauma by being informed in depth about trauma and consequences of exposure to trauma.

The organisation must work carefully and proactively to develop a strategy and achieve the identity of a vicarious trauma-informed organisation.

Basic step proposal:

1. Assess your current capacity as a vicarious trauma-informed organisation.
2. Assess your strengths and weaknesses.
3. Make a list of priority needs.
4. Collect/allocate funds for the realisation of listed needs.

Organisational capacity in relation to vicarious trauma is measured through five evidence-informed areas of organisational health:

- Leadership and mission
- Management and supervision
- Members' empowerment and work environment
- Training and professional development
- Members' health and wellbeing

Responsible organisational development for organisations active in the field of sexual violence means making a significant investment in order to achieve the identity of a vicarious trauma-informed organisation which proactively assumes responsibility for recognising and addressing the needs of its members.

Note: Vicarious trauma is a significant, comprehensive area that needs to be studied separately and specialist trainings that focus specially on this topic need to be completed. It has not been elaborated further at this point, however, as you read this entire publication, we believe you will recognise a number of ethical issues that belong to the stated areas of organisational health.

CONCLUSION

There is only one conclusion. Recovery after sexual trauma is possible. Organisations, institutions and community are an important factor that can contribute to recovery through quality work.

CHAPTER 3

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES OF THE ORGANISATION

Organisational culture is a mirror of an organisation in which every organisation looks at its reflection every day. Each organisational culture is guided by its value system and principles that indicate how the members use the authority and power they have. It is an indication of how safe we feel in our organisation and whether our organisation is a friendly environment for all its members. In its pioneering self-organisation phase, ITC developed the following policies and procedures and, over time, revised or redrafted them, primarily based on experienced knowledge:

1. Child safeguarding policy
2. Anti-discrimination policy: includes chapters on the prevention of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment as various forms of sexual misconduct, which may be committed against:
 - a) persons who come to ITC for assistance
 - b) members of the organisation
3. Creating safer organisations policy
4. Safe recruitment policy
5. Lines of communication policy (internal, within the organisation)
6. Self-care policy for helpers active in the field of sexual violence
7. Policy against financing and other support to terrorism
8. Anti-money laundering policy.

Note: To the many policies and procedures that you have in your organisation, you should also add here those that you drafted regarding the COVID 19 pandemic, which follow the new reality of work environment and its consequences on organisational culture.

An example of one of the procedures within the Creating safer organisations policy

It is necessary to preserve the awareness that women of lesbian/bisexual/transgender orientation are a socially vulnerable group relative to the majority population. In this regard, additional care is expected of all diversity as a policy dimension within the organisation in order to ensure that they do not experience any (masked) discrimination. In this context, it is also important to develop and implement a procedure that regulates that, for the purpose of ensuring the efficiency of the work process, members of the organisation that enter into romantic relationship may only work in different teams/programmes.

CONCLUSION

All of these procedures are there to establish an organisational culture and foster organisational health. Their purpose is also to enable the recognition, prevention, or sanctioning of abuse. Their drafting alone requires a deep process within the organisation in order to explore internalised attitudes, behaviours, values, and identify an organisational culture that can encourage or disable them.

CHAPTER 4

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

The term “Ethical Leadership” represents leaders who have a special obligation to demonstrate their commitment to values such as accountability, compassion, honesty, respect and assistance to others, transparency and respect for ethical beliefs of other people.

A belief that belongs to the pioneering phase of women’s self-organisation and understanding of feminism that women’s organisations (working on the issues of violence) can be non-hierarchical organisational structures – or support to this belief through the slogan that “all women are equal” – in practice most often tend to lead to informal and non-transparent hierarchies that can cause serious damage to the functioning of the organisation and the members themselves. The advantage of self-organisation is always that you have the freedom to establish your organisation as you see fit, which is a rare privilege. At the same time, there are two sides of the coin, as the establishment and development of an organisation is always a test of democracy for all its members.

Since its inception, the ITC founders decided that the organisation would implement the concept of ethical leadership. We decided that we would use the hierarchy to make our team work as operational as possible – effective and efficient. It was important to us that team roles and job descriptions clearly reflect the correct, complementary and efficient division of work.

We understood leadership as a concept of **power with the members and power for the members of ITC**. We established several control mechanisms to prevent the “power over” model from arising. Three members of the organisation have held the top managerial positions during 28 years of our work. Typically, each one was chosen by the Team, i.e. the organisation members – none of them applied for the position themselves. At the same time, for years, within the framework of the strategic focus on prevention as the field of work, we implemented a model of co-management of professional staff and youth who made up our Peer Team and ran our *Peer Club against Sexual Violence*.

Our understanding of the leaders’ role is that they carry ideas forward, promote, disseminate them, provide and receive original ideas within the organisation team and ways of realising them, bring together members to create a functional team, nurture and inspire them. This realisation of the leaders’ role has been combined with the decentralisation of authority at various levels.

Ethical leadership is a serious goal

Like any other form of self-organisation, women’s organisations are vulnerable to re-enacting patriarchal patterns. In fact, power and management are categories that need to be learned. Organisational health is a non-exhaustive, comprehensive, inspiring learning topic.

It is very difficult to find leaders in women’s organisations who can be considered as role models based on their overall behaviour. This is often caused by the fact that organisations are insufficiently familiar with each other, or this “familiarity” is actually fraught with prejudice. For example, for young organisations, the concept of role models can still be unclear today.

Working on developing a positive organisational culture entails a long-term investment, many sometimes larger or smaller interventions. It requires developed sensitivity in terms of the approach, as different areas of

organisational development have different degrees of complexity. Sensitivity includes understanding differences with regard to power, race, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, working/contractual status, physical and intellectual abilities, prejudice regarding different identities such as national and religious affiliation, etc. If sensitivity is absent, this can have direct consequences for the atmosphere of the organisation, the openness of discussion about difficulties in the team and whether individuals feel safe to communicate possible situations of abuse of power, and what kind of treatment they will encounter.

When joining a women's organisation, we find a certain organisational structure, and therefore our position in the hierarchy. Over time, we assess based on our experience whether our own position suits us, what actual positive change we can bring about at work from that position, how we are treated, what the limits of our power are, we compare our position with others.

Many different group dynamic processes can be opened in women's organisations. Many were later listed in case studies in this publication (Chapter 9: Workbook; Policy and philosophy). Although leaders may often impose their own management style, it is often also possible that the organisation itself, or its members, participate in such a way that they only follow the leader. Sometimes it is because in reality they do not have enough knowledge and experience, they are concerned that what they are doing or the organisation is doing is not good enough. In other words, they may shy away from taking responsibility. This does not mean that at a certain point in case of conflict or accumulated conflicts – even though they are gathered around one idea – there will not be difficulties due to co-existence of different opinions, the emergence of 'clans', practically factions that will fight openly or indirectly for power.

Often the realisation of the "power over" tendency is enabled or facilitated by the organisation not having developed clear Policies and Procedures. Experience in organisations shows that this does not happen by accident if the basic documents regulating the "rules of the game" are missing.

The managerial position, i.e. the position of power, is not a "job position" in the literal sense of that word. The person in the managerial position is a member of the organisation team with a job description and a responsibility that requires particular care.

It is worth reminding of two phenomena that, experience shows, follow the life of (women's) organisations:

1. Imposter Syndrome
2. Founders' Syndrome

PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE FOUNDERS' SYNDROME³

Experienced knowledge in civil society organisations proves that the behaviour of governing structures, which could include founders or long-standing members in managerial positions, may sometimes present an obstacle in organisational development.

Experience shows that, unlike the Imposter Syndrome, where members of governing structures perceive themselves as unsuccessful despite the evidence to the contrary, doubting own accomplishments and having trouble trusting their own instincts, which is why they face a decision paralysis – the Founders' Syndrome is a more common phenomenon.

³ This part of the text is adapted from the Guidelines of the Quality System of Internal Governance of the European Women's Network against Sexual Violence, a document prepared by the authors of this publication.

The Founders' Syndrome typically involves overconfidence on the side of founders and long-standing members of governing structures, who have excessive power and influence over the organisation. Just some of the 'symptoms' relate to having issues in delegating duties or introducing changes or trusting others' decision-making or evaluating own work. They may not recognise that they are actually holding back the development of the organisation, when they need to step down from the leadership position or leave the organisation. Experience shows that leadership can make or break the organisation.

Both syndromes should be on the radar of governing structures and all members. While the Imposter Syndrome might be dealt with by providing professional and personal support and by sharing these issues with someone with whom one could really talk, in order to influence this mindset, the Founders' Syndrome may seriously influence the health, culture, even the sustainability of the organisation – if it appears and remains unrecognised. Instead, it needs to be put openly on the table and treated as the subject of both intervention and supervision in the organisation and its governing structures. The Founders' Syndrome can be difficult to self-diagnose because members of governing structures can be extremely involved and lose sight of their personal status.

To avoid both of these phenomena, the organisation needs to implement the strategy of encouraging new ethical leaders and ethical leadership. An essential part of strategy needs to be the creation of a Succession Plan (what will happen one day if and when the founders and long-standing members of governing structures eventually leave the organisation). Another option might be for them e.g. to step away from organisation for a while for a well-deserved break and learn it can run without them.

Potential and capacities for positive organisational change make:

- Ethical leadership
- Safer recruitment
- Creating safer organisational policies
- Training, supervision and continuous professional development (area of trauma and organisational development towards sustainability)
- Special attention to the Founders' Syndrome (actions of encouraging, nurturing and helping new ethical leaders)
- Identity of vicarious trauma-informed organisation

Conclusion

Ethical leadership is the choice of ITC and we constantly keep learning about it, because mutual respect within the organisation is invaluable to us. We recognise it as the basic foundation for healthy organisational development.

CONNECTING WITH RELEVANT RESOURCES

There are different resources that help the organisation encourage its members and upgrade the quality of its work, while reducing stress. Based on experience, these are our recommendations:

1. **Personal resources:** how would you describe your personal support system, what is your favourite way to spend private time, which persons make up your support system?
2. **Organisational resources:** day-to-day intervision, regular clinical supervision (case management) and supervision aimed at service development, i.e. improvement of organisational development, study visits and other forms of professional exchanges. Care for the members of the organisation by: ensuring free time, regular holidays, rewarding quality work, organised time for strengthening team cohesion (recommendation is to organise it outside the organisation's premises), paid and organised self-care, etc.

Note: Finding a quality supervisor in the field of sexual violence is not an easy task, and without quality supervision work must not be conducted. A supervisory work model needs to be carefully organised so that it continuously raises the level of trust within the organisation. ITC has had the privilege of having four psychotherapists from the Netherlands supervise our work: content in the field of sexual trauma and organisational issues.

3. **Self-education:** make sure that you have access to the latest professional literature, audio and video material, with the aim of continuous professional development, getting yourself acquainted with the latest perspectives, the most recent knowledge in the field of sexual violence.
4. **Training:** continuously search for quality sources of training and learning in general, meet and learn from colleagues from the international professional community, from whom you can learn continuously and connect with them. **Current and up-to-date knowledge is essential.**
5. **Community:** your engagement in community is of extraordinary importance and includes local, national, regional and international level. The community is a principal reflection of reality and, for the organisation, the ground beneath its feet. The core of this engagement is the involvement of survivors of sexual violence in different identities, for example in the role of carrying out identification of needs, planning, designing programmes, performing programme activities (for example, a national campaign), evaluations.
6. **Networks:** involvement in (online) expert group exchanges, in activist coalitions/movements - at local, national, regional and/or international level. Building alliances is nurturing. Find like-minded persons with whom you share values and professional views, because that is also part of self-care. In one part, networks can also have the function of a support system in which you exchange with your colleagues how each one of you deals with the complexity of facing experiences of sexual violence on a daily basis, i.e. the emotional component of our work.
7. **Monitoring and evaluation:** they represent two support mechanisms for reflection regarding the improvement and quality of work. Our recommendation is to design, as part of supervision, an internal monitoring and evaluation model that is tailor-made for your organisation with regard to the content of work and organisational development. As soon as the process of designing the internal model is conducted by having all members actively provide their contribution, its implementation will be facilitated, as the sense of ownership has already been created in relation to each step that will follow. This also defines the responsibility of all members from the very beginning.

CHAPTER 6

POLICY AND RESILIENCE

We consider the policy of the organisation crucial to its operation. Sometimes we think that we have spent “most” of our time in the past 28 years of our work reflecting on what a situation is about and how to act, that we have spent a great amount of time making decisions. But decisions actually say everything about you. Decisions are everything.

The organisation’s harmonised positions after reflection and discussion are necessary. Positions make up the identity of the organisation, they are your public face – when you show them in public, but also when you do not.

Key words that make up the identity of ITC are the “essence” that disturbs the non-democratic government and the public. These are: women’s, non-governmental organisation, sexual violence, child sexual abuse, confronting the past, LGBT+ human rights, child sexual abuse within the Serbian Orthodox Church.

We have opened up new perspectives and taboos inside taboos. We have analysed trends in the field of sexual violence in the Republic of Serbia and discussed them publicly. The response of the government and certain retrograde forces has too often been a (clearly purposeful) strategy of challenging and attacking self-organising women engaging in public work in their united identities as experts and activists. Misogyny, in a word.

Our work is conducted in a social context, and, with our policy, we have demonstrated the position:

- Of an independent women’s non-governmental specialised service in the field of sexual violence.
- Against sexual violence – through being an ally to survivors of sexual violence and reporting sexual violence offenders, providing a professional opinion of ITC for the purposes of criminal proceedings and persistent court appearances in a role of expert witness based on direct work with a child/adult survivor.
- Against the war, participating in the anti-war movement in Serbia initiated in response to the wars during the 90ies in the former Yugoslavia, in which the Republic of Serbia was the aggressor.
- In favour of confronting the past, which means the validation of experiences of victims of the wars in the former Yugoslavia of all nationalities and religions, and condemnation of the genocide in Srebrenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, war crimes committed and war criminals of all nationalities and religions, including Serbian.
- We have always been publicly advocating for LGBT+ human rights, which, together with confronting the past in Serbia, tests in the most direct manner the level of democracy in society.
- We speak publicly about the existence of child sexual abuse within the Serbian Orthodox Church.
- We always publicly state our positions about Serbia’s role in the wars in the former Yugoslavia, commitment to confronting the past and advocacy for LGBT+ human rights in all regular communications to the outside world. Only one example: ITC has so far trained more than 12,000 colleagues from government institutions and NGOs, and at each introductory presentation of ITC, we immediately state this commitment, which constitutes part of our identity.

- Since one part of our expertise is in the field of trauma in children, in 1995 it was made available to children who experienced the trauma of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia through our *War Trauma Programme* that existed in ITC until 2003.
- At the time of the war in Kosovo, we decided to focus our resources on Roma child refugees and their mothers, so together with the leader of the first Roma women's NGO in our country, who joined our team as a permanent member, worked with Albanian Roma who arrived in local Roma settlements in Belgrade in a state of acute trauma. Work with local and refugee Roma children and women was conducted every week until 2003.
- We established and ran the first self-help/support groups in the Republic of Serbia for child, adolescent and women survivors of sexual violence.
- We established and ran the first support groups in the Republic of Serbia for women survivors of partner violence.
- Our Crisis Line succeeded for several years to respond in the regime 24/7 (before and after open in usual working hours during a day.)
- We carried out the first National Study on the Social Issue of Child Sexual Abuse in the Republic of Serbia. Conducted on a representative sample of primary and secondary schools, the National Study is to date the only example of the government opening up to break the taboo about the prevalence of sexual abuse of children. So far, the second National Study was not done. A taboo about different social topics is always best preserved if precise figures are not known.
- We wrote the only strategy for the prevention of sexual abuse of children so far in our country: the Strategy of the Education Sector for the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Children in the Republic of Serbia, which was adopted by the Government of the Republic of Serbia (intended for application by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia).
- We have established direct cooperation with similar women's organisations in the former Yugoslavia that share the same values. Cooperation through specialist trainings and supervision conducted by ITC, as well as a Conference, as an opportunity for professional exchange.
- We provided a concrete contribution to the establishment and training of the first women's NGOs in our country, founded and led by women from marginalised social groups for women from marginalised social groups (Roma women, women with disabilities, lesbians and bisexual women).
- Based on the needs of the first women's NGO in our country whose mission are lesbian human rights, we established and operated for five years the first counselling service for lesbians and bisexual women in the ITC premises.
- We were the first to raise the issue of pressure on sexual identity within women's NGOs.
- We were the first to raise the issue of violence in lesbian partner relations.
- We were the first to raise the issue of child sexual abuse by helpers (employed with education institutions, social care institutions, etc.).

- We were the first to raise the issue of sexual violence in sports, where the offenders are coaches and other sports staff.
- We were the first to raise the issue of women human rights defenders active in the field of sexual violence.
- **We realised two systemic initiatives of ITC:**
 1. Elimination of the statute of limitation for sexual offenses committed against children - a historic legislative change approved by the Serbian Parliament, whereby, in April 2013, the Republic of Serbia became the second country in Europe (after United Kingdom), which legally recognises the long-lasting effect of trauma on the child.
 2. Introduction of learning about the issue of sexual violence in the national curriculum of kindergartens, primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Serbia. A strong reaction of the clergy, right-wing extremists to this systemic solution was registered, as well the weakness of the government of Serbia in its withdrawal before these retrograde forces was noted. *Educational Packs for Learning on the Issue of Sexual Violence* are available as a free aid for all employees in the education sector for use in kindergartens and classes.
- The media are the most powerful educators, although it should be the education system. In the context of public relations and in cooperation with the media, we are guided by our “white” and “black” media list. The criterion is the value system they advocate, which determines the ethics and veracity of their reporting. In addition, we do not take part in shows that are designed as “for” and “against”, because we believe that guaranteed human rights cannot be discussed in this manner. The same applies to any other form of public appearances or public events.
- The media (as well as the police, prosecutor’s office and court, health, social and education institutions) are the force and instrument of power that bears the responsibility for preventing the re-traumatisation of the victim. We have conducted a considerable number of specialist trainings for media representatives so that they would understand:
 - a) How to report ethically on the issue of sexual violence.
 - b) How to avoid traps (sensationalism vs. confidentiality)
 - c) Why it is important for the helpers to communicate from the perspective of the broader picture of misogyny in Serbia and its oppressive rules.
- We implemented the co-management model by the professional ITC staff and young people who led our Peer Team and the first Peer Club against Sexual Violence in our country.
- We trained the first team of teachers who can teach self-defence in case of sexual assault during regular physical education classes.
- We were the first to raise the issue of mother-daughter incest.
- We were the first to connect art and the issue of sexual violence and showed how films, music, exhibitions and video games can be used as an instrument of public advocacy in the field of sexual violence.

Note: Unfortunately, many of these issues have still, so far, not been dealt with by anyone else in our country.

Our experience shows the following:

- The integrity of an organisation against sexual violence is of paramount importance.
- Sexuality and sexual violence are used in attacks on progressive social forces, defenders of women's human rights.
- Exposure to structural violence when you publicly advocate for human rights and point out that sexual violence is most often an instrument of control over a child and woman in the family. Structural violence is a negative, violent treatment to which government institutions subject women who vocally discuss unpopular social topics.
- Since the establishment of ITC, our statistics developed based on the cases reported to our service have been the only representative data in the territory of Serbia, besides police data. They were included in several national documents, based on which public policies were drafted at different times. When the intention is to show there is no sexual violence in the Republic of Serbia, different actors resort to misusing the statistical data of ITC and attacking their accuracy and representativeness. This was most commonly done by pro-regime media around short-term political agenda, but also by MPs from right-wing political parties.
- It will come at a personal cost, and the price is high when:
 - a) You represent in criminal proceedings child and adult survivors of sexual violence
 - b) You represent child and adult survivors of sexual violence in the media
 - c) When you make a tangible impact on changing the education system⁴ in the interest of child and adult survivors of sexual violence
- During our participation in criminal proceedings in cases of sexual violence, we noted the following:
 - a) All the participants involved in criminal proceedings, starting with the police, the prosecutor's office, the court, as well as the media, need to respect the role of helpers who fulfil the legal obligation to report sexual crimes, issue a written professional opinion on the trauma experienced by the child for the benefit of the court during criminal proceedings, and by law, represent the child in a responsible manner and according to the law by personally appearing in court.
 - b) The actors involved in criminal proceedings are obliged to recognise their own resistance to the understanding of the issue of sexual violence and to cease their behaviour burdened with prejudice that endangers the child and adult survivor of sexual violence. Deeply rooted, internalised attitudes against child/adult survivor's welfare are not allowed in interventions in this field. Thus, instead of the institution and the individuals employed with it representing protection, they pose a threat.
 - c) There is a risk of the establishment of an analogy between the position of a victim of sexual violence and the position of helpers when the prosecution procedure is not regulated and is not conducted in a victim-friendly manner. Helpers are then forced to figure out on their own how to stand up to structural violence.
 - d) Leaking information to the public through the media about the proceedings and identity of the participants in the process. No one is ultimately responsible or punished for causing additional fear in the child or adult survivor of sexual violence and for the additional hours of counselling and additional preparation for court that are needed to ensure that the person does not withdraw from the proceedings due to justified fear.
 - e) Each rare attempt to interfere with the independence of ITC's work in the form of influencing

⁴ See more details here: [Advocacy and Lobbying Pack: Use your authority and support the return of the Educational Packs for Learning on Child Sexual Abuse in Serbia \(2020\)@Incest Trauma Center - Belgrade, Serbia](#)

the professional opinion we give for the purposes of criminal proceedings, mostly by persons in influential positions in different spheres of life, including persons active in political life in Serbia. **The fact that the attempts were very few has convinced us that we have built the reputation of ITC that deters anyone from even considering an attempt to exert influence.**

f) Our years of work experience has made us wary of the possibility of links between certain court experts and certain law offices that most often represent well-known individuals from the criminal environment or individuals known to the public due to their position. The suspicion concerning these links is based on the regular opinions of certain, always the same, court experts that benefit the accused by directly disputing, mistrusting the testimony of the child/adult survivor of sexual violence.

g) The exposure⁵ of the helper who is an expert witness in the court to constant attacks by the defence counsel in the courtroom and directly by the accused in the streets.

We have experienced the following:

h) We have been subjected to police “checks” and told that “there is money from a person from the criminal environment and that we should use it to open a shelter for abused women and children”. Our answer was no one should ever again come to us with a similar idea.

i) We were subjected to a series of informative interviews by employees of the Security and Intelligence Agency (State Security, at that time), which took place in and out of the ITC premises, in order to intimidate us and interrupt our social engagement. We obviously never reduced or interrupted it.

j) Since the 1990ies to date, there have been a number of concrete indications that the government authorities have tapped the founders’ phones. Any conversation physically interrupted by the “operator” is resumed immediately in the same manner as previously.

Conclusion

The ITC policy is adamant and clear in that it involves the practical application of national and international legislation in all spheres of life, as well as active mechanisms of application oversight. In order to ensure the safety of all of us. That is a common denominator for everything we have done.

⁵ See more details here: Survey Report: Social Position, Experiences and Strengths of the Women Human Rights Defenders Active in the Field of Sexual Violence (2021©Incest Trauma Center – Belgrade, Serbia)

ATTITUDE OF THE COMMUNITY TO A WOMEN'S ORGANISATION THAT HAS A CLEAR MISSION AND INDEPENDENT POLICY

The ITC's experience is that we have been conducting programme activities that were actually ahead of their time, not only in our country but also in the Balkans. In certain aspects, this is still true today. We have learned the following:

- All the actors we encountered in our work have always respected the ITC's expertise. The expertise in the field of sexual trauma and recovery has opened all doors.
- Citizens have always properly understood the key messages of our activities. This is demonstrated by the trust of children and adults who came to us to work on recovery (on average 6 reported cases of sexual violence a week during 28 years of work) and thousands of citizens who have taken part in our preventive activities.
- The professional community needed time to understand the key messages of our activities. They held on to their positions of power, without enough knowledge in the field of sexual violence. That took up precious time, they closed off as a system. Example: when ITC raised the issue of child sexual abuse by helpers (staff in homes for children without parental care, staff in residential institutions for long-term stay of children with disability, etc.).
- The community is often burdened by general prejudice against women's NGOs (incompetent, spreading the spectre of feminism, activists cannot be experts as well, having a lot of money from abroad, foreign spies/mercenaries, against the family, etc.). In the event of community actors having had concrete experience in contact with women's organisations they were not satisfied with (sometimes for good reason), additional investment was required from our side to crystallise our position based on expertise and direct experience in the work as practitioners. In these situations, we have learned that doors are opened by professional competences and the fact that we are practitioners in our work. When the audience you are addressing has certain ambivalence and dilemmas, the key is "roll up your sleeves and show what you got".
- Because we choose who finances us, there is no possibility for anyone to influence our independence. We choose to contact donors who respect the autonomy of partner organisations. This means that you have less money (in our case, we have remained a low-budget organisation), which is insufficient for everything needed in the work but enables independence. The most common feedback we have received is that it is unthinkable how much we have achieved in view of the limited resources at our disposal.

When we establish and monitor co-operation and partnerships, we do it at two levels: personal, as individuals, and as an organisation. Because, ultimately, it is the people who need to cooperate.

The questions we ask ourselves have the following focus:

- Cooperation and vision building
 - Cooperation is an interaction of specific knowledge.
 - Expanding cooperation into a network, what is network support for us?
 - An authentic partnership actually causes the "system reboot" phenomenon.
 - How will the community react to "system reboot"? What does it need to support it?
 - Rely on the benefits of cooperation: transfer of knowledge, skills and experience, support and assistance, the law meets the institutions/organisations implementing it.

- Government institutions and NGOs: from co-operation to authentic partnership.

- Competent people coming together around the same goal
- Multidisciplinarity: do we know our place well?
- Expect overwhelming awareness raising, processing newly acquired knowledge and insights
- Effect: the experience of “system reboot”
- A sense of hope grows from unity.
- A wider area of assistance opens up.
- A powerful change in understanding the world around you.
- Increased awareness of own internal process.
- Awareness of the obstacles others encounter in the system.
- A reflection of own efficiency.
- The network makes the work easier.
- You feel more efficient through the network as an individual doing their job (this effect may affect you as a team worker in your organisation).
- Increased confidence.

Obstacles:

- Mistrust due to mutual differences, which concern, for example, professions, place of work and political views
- Rivalry between different professions, institutions and organisations, political backgrounds, which is applicable not only among government institutions and NGOs but also among institutions within the government/public sector and organisations within the non-governmental sector.
- Personal motivation and motivation of the institution/organisation can be changed, which raises the following question: how to establish and maintain a balance between personal and institutional wellbeing, on the one hand, and the wellbeing of the network or partnership as a whole, on the other hand.
- The necessary consensus, for example regarding the views concerning the value system, policy, philosophy, and how the decision-making process will take place.
- The rift that has been established during the long history of (non-)cooperation needs to be bridged, constantly paying attention to this rift in the process. It is not easy to reconcile all complex differences.

Note: The overview can be analysed through the prism of cooperation among any group of institutions/organisations, checking whether there are significant differences in the key questions we ask ourselves during cooperation and in the experience of potential obstacles. Therefore, the overview can also be useful for cooperation that is not exclusively between government institutions and NGOs. Its greatest benefit is the encouragement of lively discussions, reflection and analysis within your organisation.

Women's organisations and loyalty to them

Loyalty to other women's organisations has prevented us from publicly presenting the obstacles that other women's organisations have placed before us. We were guided by the importance of not increasing the vulnerability of this

already marginalised part of society. Working with women's organisations in Western Europe, we have learned that this is also a phenomenon that needs to be discussed publicly in order to initiate positive changes.

We have experienced the following:

- "Marking territories": "they work only with children".
- Spreading negative rumours that we have ceased to work: "they have closed", "they no longer work directly with clients", "they closed after the violence they experienced".
- "They have huge wages."
- Attacks against independence: "They work closely with the government; they get grants from open calls".
- Taking action in order to limit access to donors. This was possible with donors whose staff had, to a certain degree, privatised their relations with certain members of women's organisations.
- And we have reason to believe there is more.

For almost all of the above items, we received information from our clients who came to ITC to work through sexual trauma. The information was given to them before they came to us, when they contacted other organisations for help. When rumours were spread, our expertise was never challenged. The phenomenon of spreading inaccurate and negative rumours should be observed specifically in the context of the fact that ITC has gradually been distancing itself from women's organisations over the past twenty years reaching the level of complete lack of communication and joint activities, which has been the case for the past 13 years. Even with our clear distancing, the spread of negative rumours as a way of causing harm has not ceased.

The reasons for distancing lie in the fact that among a number of organisations, we no longer recognised as sharing the same value system. One of the important segments relates to the policy of disrespectful, negative treatment of women in the women's movement – within their organisations or within the women's movement in general – by the centres of power that exist within the movement, thus taking up the role of negative role models in this respect. For us, it was not the feminism developed and advocated by ITC. We dedicated time in the course of our regular supervision to this process that lasted many years. The work was about loss and the grieving process, because the women's movement was supposed to be the natural place for our organisation.

We had several discussions within ITC about whether human rights (mixed) organisations have become our greater allies over time because of frequent support we provide on the basis of common policy. This hypothesis remains unsubstantiated, as our actual familiarity with human rights organisations as organisational entities with their organisational culture is, in fact, insufficient.

What do we recognise as the causes of the unfair game?

- Success is not forgiven (envy, jealousy).
- We have always publicly and clearly stated our value system and have consistently adhered to it.
- Rivalry demonstrated through unfair competition (unfair game, contrary to good business practices).
- Even when they identify irregularities, smaller women's organisations do not have a strong voice to raise when they depend on financially stable women's organisations (through money, information, involvement in at least some of the ongoing activities, etc.) - in other words, not antagonising the centres of power or sharing the same values with them.

Conclusion

The ITC policy has always treated the same all potential, current, former co-operating institutions/organisations, regardless of whether they belong to the public, private or non-governmental sector. When we recognise that cooperation has no positive outlook, we state our position openly and “evacuate” swiftly. Our way is to withdraw without discussion, because we have limited resources as an organisation (ten full-time or part-time members) and we cannot spend our time and energy on (potential) conflicts. The resources we have are directed toward healthy environments with healthy communication.

CHAPTER 8

ATTITUDE OF DONOR ORGANISATIONS TOWARDS A WOMEN'S ORGANISATION WITH A CLEAR MISSION AND INDEPENDENT POLICY

An example of a positive approach of donors that can also be applied to the field of sexual violence

The only local women's foundation in our country, the Reconstruction Women's Fund, insisted on the following within the donor group whose meeting we attended:

- How do donors get to grassroots women's organisations and how do they engage with these organisations?
- How do donors really make sure they get to grassroots women's organisations?
- Who do they support? How do they do the mapping of organisations that are credible, work well and have actual results?
- How do donors support women's organisations specifically, apart from financially?
- Do all donors have a budget line that relates to women's human rights and the rights of the child?
- How do donors prioritise, how do they assess what is a priority for women's organisations?
- How do donors express interest in constructive feedback from women's organisations?
- Is there really a donor community or just a group of donors? What does that mean for women's organisations?
- Do donor organisations regularly organise co-ordination meetings?
- What does the responsibility of donors include?
- What challenges do donors face and how do they communicate them to women's grassroots organisations?

In our experience, we have encountered the following situations.

Case study 1: Sexual violence is not a priority or a popular topic for donors.

ITC's experience shows that the area of sexual violence is certainly underfunded and is not a donor priority. Experience suggests that this is not a "popular" topic for financing or other support. International donors often treat it as an internal issue of a country that is obliged to resolve the social issue of violence against women and children from its own funds. What if you live and work in non-democratic countries which do not accept this funding as their responsibility?

It is important to consider what are, if any, donor strategies to include feedback from women's organisations active in the field of sexual violence related to current and future programmes. Is this possible, or is it just some kind of "wishful thinking"? If you are a member of the donor community, do you recognise that it is in your power to draw attention to this issue within the donor community and your donor organisation? This is certainly a focus of advocacy activities, which need to be conducted by women's organisations active in the field of sexual violence.

Case study 2: There are organisations that are able to come up with original systemic solutions.

Depending on the policy, knowledge, skills and experience of the organisation, project ideas are original, innovative – or old, already implemented ideas are recycled. The crisis with regard to new project ideas is primarily on the side of organisations that, if they have a good knowledge of the field in which they work, should be able to offer new and systemic solutions. It is essential that all solutions include critical evidence-based analysis, applied to the field of trauma and recovery.

“Once again, someone reinvents a wheel, the world starts with them...”, a comment that is often heard, with good reason, from women’s organisations that started organised work in our country in the field of violence against women and children over thirty years ago.

The government does not have a long history of working in this area, and has an even shorter history of authentic efforts. It introduces the medical model in the field of offered solutions for sexual violence, as pilot projects, which appear and ... Donors’ practice that causes systemic difficulties consists of supporting project ideas that, in recognisable cycles (every few years), start again by addressing, in particular, the issue of child sexual abuse. It is not much different in the field of violence against women. For example, we have witnessed a failure to recognise the results of women’s organisations willing to have their tangible positive results applied at the systemic level. Instead, several times the “same money” is given to the triad of government institutions - selected media - selected GONGOs (abbreviation for the phenomenon of government NGOs, one or several of them), and they are always considerable sums of money. The question arises regarding the needs assessment on which this is based and what the interest is, as this is not in the interest of child and adult survivors of violence. Responsibility lies with everyone in the triad and the donor that decides on what they spend money.

In line with our history, policy and resilience, we are not observers and, instead, we ask whether the interest is to maintain the status quo, a stagnation of this issue for decades. To keep the subject as taboo, hidden, unresolved, for a long time. Because in the field of child sexual abuse in our country, much more could have been done systemically. Both in terms of prevention and intervention. Options, especially financial ones, were there.

Recycling in the field of violence against women and children has not stopped. It is a responsibility of donors to develop a different approach, way of thinking, plan.

Case study 3: It is not all about financial support, but in a broader picture related to sustainability.

The most common focus donors recognise is financial support as the main form of assistance. Financial support is, with good reason, certainly a focus among organisations. Without concrete money, it is hard to make much of a difference.

However, the following questions arise:

- Have the donors recognised other forms of support?
- If so, to what extent?
- Are other forms of support appreciated – both by the donor (including them as possible) and by the organisation (properly understanding the significance, or does only getting money directly “count”)?
- What other concrete and tangible forms of support can be useful to women’s organisations active in the field of sexual violence?

Note:

- ITC had the privilege of being provided, during the first 13 years of its work, by a donor organisation Mala Sirena (Little Mermaid), registered in the Netherlands, Dutch professional support by a total of eight experts in the field of trauma. At regular time intervals (every 2–3 months), they provided ITC and our partner organisations with series of specialist trainings, while ITC was also provided supervision.
- Global Fund for Children, USA, provides a possibility to its partner organisations that are at the end of multi-year financing, to receive a Sustainability Award. This is a recognition for which there is an opportunity for the organisation to define independently and present to the donor its purpose. For example, ITC invested funds in technical equipment for its Training Centre, as well as in professional development of members of the organisation, including in the field of supervision. Both activities, supervision and specialist training, contribute to the diversification of funds in the long run by enabling self-financing by ITC, thus supporting sustainability.

Case study 4: Being a women's organisation active in the field of sexual violence is diversity.

To be an active organisation in the field of sexual violence for many years is a lofty goal in our societies. It is not the same to achieve the identity of a women's organisation and a mixed organisation. It is not the same to be a woman defender of human rights of women and children, and to be a man human rights defender. The power in society is different and society has a different, less supportive treatment of women's organisations, where the women defenders of human rights of women and child survivors of sexual violence are active. Donors are part of a society that has the responsibility to recognise this diversity and avoid the repetition of marginalisation.

Case study 5: Lack of respect for autonomy and expertise of a women's organisation.**We have experienced the following:**

- a) Explicit request by the donor organisation in the middle of the project to include the staff of centres for social work in specialist training for police officers, explaining that "they should also learn" (without considering how, for example, the inclusion of a new target group will affect openness in the work of the primary training target group with its own specificities). **We rejected the demand.**
- b) During the review whether the visibility of the donor's financial contribution was properly displayed, the donor did not approve the video clip in the ***Campaign against Child Sexual Abuse*** responding to the statistical data provided in the video, which referred to the prevalence of this phenomenon globally. The reaction was: "Panic will ensue in Serbia, remove this data". This happened after we had been in our country for many years publicly quoting data on global prevalence and published regular annual ITC data based on cases reported to our service. **This was the reason we terminated the three-year contract.**
- c) For attacks on autonomy, see also the *Foreword (ITC Dossier)*.

Case study 6: The infamous "disclaimer".

We attended a public event of signing new contracts with partner organisations as part of a public call. The donor organisation decided to show positive examples of results from the previous cycle, with one organisation presenting the video material it had created. In this short film, we recognised the main character of the film as

the serial child sexual abuse offender at the collective centre for migrants. This was an ongoing ITC case at the time. We informed the donor that it would not be advisable to continue to show and distribute this film further.

Conclusion

All of the above can be taken by donor organisations as a form of needs assessment for women's organisations in the field of (sexual) violence.

WORKBOOK

CHAPTER 9: WORKBOOK

POLICY AND ORGANISATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Organisational philosophy describes how you work as an organisation, how you function, what you offer and how you are organised in meeting your goals. The organisation's mission and philosophy are two valuable instruments used during the process of planning programme activities. Your organisational philosophy is an integral part of the policy you represent.

Women's organisations (and NGOs in general) have the privilege and responsibility to define their own rules on how they will get organised. Since joining to the Belgrade SOS Crisis Line, back in 1993, the ITC founders have emphasised that it is essential to invest in organisational development, primarily in learning about organisational development. Since we established ITC in January 1994 to date, hand in hand with the content of our work on sexual trauma, organisational development has remained our focus.

This chapter reflects our experience of assisting other women's NGOs with regard to group dynamic processes for the purpose of organisational development. We came across most of the issues ourselves in ITC when building our own organisation. In order to avoid developing a "formula" how to address certain situations solely based on our experience of developing an organisation, we will present below what we have learned from providing assistance to other organisations.

The situations are real and we presented them in the form of case studies (26 in total), in order to highlight different group dynamic issues that make up the life of an organisation. The list of situations is certainly not exhaustive and these are just some more frequent ones. In each situation, it is stated what key ethical issues were raised in the discussion in the organisations, and in those group processes that resulted in the identification of suggestions, recommendations and lessons learned, they are also noted. The list of ethical issues is also not exhaustive. Although they have become a significant factor, you will recognise that we have decided not to analyse at this point the impact of social networks on the dynamics of organisations. Feel free to address this aspect in your discussions.

Whether your organisation is in the pioneering or other stage of organisational development (with the length of the organisation's existence not necessarily being a reflection of its development in a positive sense), the creation of an effective organisational culture requires careful reflection and decision-making on a number of ethical issues. It is never too late to completely reverse any negative trends.

The chapter has the format of a *Workbook*, because we want to make it easier for you to reflect while reading this, as well as when you open lively discussions in your organisations. Avoid providing politically correct answers. You are looking for answers for yourself. We hope the *Workbook* to be a source of inspiration for you to open up new perspectives of your development.

Case study 1:**Power in the organisation, its distribution and decision making**

- a) Who creates the organisation's policy? Who makes the decisions? What procedures define that? Are those procedures complied with consistently and strictly?

- b) How many times has the organisation's leader changed? How? Who succeeded her?

- c) If the person running the organisation has not changed so far, why do you think that is?

- d) How many members are in managerial positions in the organisation (on a daily basis, during everyday teamwork)? This refers to programme managers, team leaders, etc. How were they elected and how long have they been in those positions?

- e) How has the learning about organisational development been organised in the organisation so far? Who made this decision and how?

- f) How many members know each other from before? How do they know each other, in what way? How many members of the organisation have built a private relationship in addition to a professional relationship while working in the organisation? How many have not? Are there open discussions at team meetings about how private relationships affect professional work? Is there any open discussion on how to take care of professional relationships where they are intertwined with private relationships? Is there any discussion on how to prevent or avoid nepotism? Do you think the goal in your organisation is zero nepotism?

- g) Who makes decisions about who will become a member of the organisation? Who decides who will be hired? How are these decisions made? When are those decisions simple and when are they difficult?

- h) Who writes projects? Who speaks English or any other foreign language? Who travels and where (local, international travel)? Who makes these decisions?

- i) Which member(s) is/are responsible for communicating with international donors/organisations? Who is responsible for local ones?

- j) How is the content of the project determined, what does this process look like? How do you decide which member will work on which project? Who actually decides on this?

- k) If the organisation organises panel discussions, round tables, trainings and other public events, how many persons are the “face of the organisation” in public? Who decides on that? How?

- l) Who speaks on behalf of the organisation in the media? Who appears in the media for what content? Who decides on that? How?

- m) Who is in charge of money? Who makes decisions about money? Who is physically in charge of it?

- n) Who is involved in street campaigns? Who decides what campaigns will be supported (in the street, online, etc.)?
- o) Is there one, two or three people whose name has been mentioned more than three times in the answers to previous questions? If so, how do you understand that fact? How do you understand the impact of this fact on the organisation's atmosphere?
- p) For each item from a to o, ask the following question: What is the level of satisfaction with decisions among members of the organisation? If you do not know, how will you find out and when??

Your reflexion, suggestions:

Case study 2:

Motivation to work in the organisation

- a) It is an extremely difficult task to find staff, volunteers and external associates who can work confidently and well in the field of (sexual) violence, are willing to learn and wish to stay in this field and organisation.
- b) The value system and loyalty are of key importance. Sometimes the difference in motivation is observed in relation to whether the members entered the organisation after volunteering for many years or based on a job advertisement.
- c) In organisations, it is often necessary to work very hard. Not all the members are ready for it.
- d) People rarely decide to work in the field of sexual violence. They are even less likely to stay. The job is difficult and complex. It involves many years of constantly listening to concentrated experiences of sexual violence. Personal safety of the members may also be at risk.
- e) Women join women's organisations in different periods of their lives with different priorities in life. Their priorities also change during their work in the organisation.
- f) Sometimes motivation is based on personal history of (sexual) violence. A lot of work on the recovery process often makes these members the best resources in the organisation. In return, working in an organisation of this type can greatly promote recovery.
- g) Sometimes joining the organisation is related to the members' need to work through their experience of (sexual) violence. This can essentially be recognised as a positive step, as long as it does not slow down or interrupt the work process. The organisation aims to do the job and, at the same time, take care of its members. However, when you are hired, the organisation must not become a self-help group unless it is its primary mandate (there are women's organisations of that type). In that case, it is important to seek professional psychological assistance outside of your work environment to work through the personal history of violence. Sometimes the organisation will give the best recommendation where to go.
- h) There are members of the organisation who have a personal history of (sexual) violence, but are not ready to work through their experience. When difficulties arise in team work, it is not easy to distinguish in these situations which unconstructive behaviours stem from the personal history, and which belong to the person - independently of her personal history. Unconstructive behaviour would obviously not be allowed in the organisation for any reason. Sometimes, this becomes apparent when the power is delegated to this member who abuses it. Sometimes, there are members who like "satellites" want to be close to the organisation or in an organisation that works in the field of violence, but are unwilling to work through their own experience of violence. They stick around like "glue", possibly contributing to the organisation in a discreet status, and then manifest unconstructive behaviour with a delay or at some point in the future.
- i) Sometimes members feel they are not making progress at the personal and professional level, as if their growth were stagnating. They may feel weariness, disappointed. They may seek to pursue their career in a different setting than a women's NGO (perhaps in another sector).
- j) Sometimes, the place and the importance of someone's personal life is underestimated in relation to the professional life, and inadequate, high expectations develop.
- k) What if the organisation is for its member her entire life and identity? Does she cultivate her private time and her personal life? Does she lay "greater claim" to the organisation? "Greater claim" to its results?

- l) In women's organisations, some members have access to managerial positions and powers that, based on their actual capacity, they would not have attained in any other workplace outside the organisation. This may be a strong motivation to remain in the organisation, but it does not automatically mean that they will always use power in a democratic manner. Instead of using it as "power for" and "power with" target groups of the organisation and/or members of the organisation, it can be used as "power over" target groups of the organisation and/or members of the organisation.
- m) It is important to design different ways of motivating members (awards, benefits in line with the possibilities and good knowledge of the team).
- n) Build such an organisational culture where members will always feel in the course of discussions that there is an "inner allowance" of the organisation to the members to leave the organisation, without it being prompted by conflict, but because, at that point in time, members may set different priorities in their life. Establish a climate where departure for the purpose of personal growth is viewed positively.
- o) It is important for each member to monitor and measure their personal motivation at regular intervals. This can be done via a very simple graphic. For example, use a coordinate system in which the horizontal axis depicts the years from the moment you joined the organisation to date. The vertical axis depicts a scale from 0 to 10 of your motivation over those years. Once you have drawn the development of your motivation, for the points where you record ups and downs, indicate the events which were important to you and you believe had a positive or negative effect. Continue to monitor your motivation regularly. Inform the team about it and invite other members to have an exchange on that topic.

Your reflexion, suggestions:

Case study 3:**When a person who was a previously a client of the organisation applies to work in the organisation**

- a) Some organisations' mission is, in fact, to bring together sexual violence survivors. They run the organisation and participate in its work. This self-organisation presents a special, precious, unique resource. If your organisation is not based on this model, special care is needed. This is an important issue that, following a lively discussion and agreement in the organisation, becomes part of your Policies and Procedures.
- b) After an administrative check to see if the qualifications of the person correspond to the requirements of the vacancy, it is necessary to discuss mutual expectations. Directly raise the issue of how previous status can affect work and co-operation. Applying to work in an organisation can, for example, reflect the positive experience of a client in counselling (her experience with the organisation). However, it is important to discuss the fact that the work environment generally has a different dynamic, including an encounter with the development of the power dynamics in the organisation.
- c) Sometimes the way for former clients to get involved in an organisation may be volunteering in a campaign against (sexual) violence. It is obviously different if she officially applied for a paid position.
- d) Extreme care is important in this situation in order to avoid any harm to the former client.

Your reflexion, suggestions:

Case study 4:

Civil option vs. national one

- a) During the 1990ies, when a number of women's organisations were created in our country, as part of civil orientation and peace movement, they jointly protested against the wars in the former Yugoslavia, which brought them together.
- b) Although not all members of organisations had public civic orientation at the time; after the political changes in 2000, it became clear that there was a civic and a national option in women's organisations as well.
- c) The differences became more visible. Not all organisations are publicly in favour of the process of confronting the past, not all of them publicly advocate for LGBT+ human rights, do not publicly raise a voice against the church that, with its announcements, threatens women's human rights, the rights of the child, the rights of LGBT+ persons. In order to obtain funding, they approach their local self-governments, where the civic option is usually not the one that won the elections. Funding can entail the obligation to make concessions in relation to the organisation's policy.
- d) Some other compromises are made. The language pointing out violence changes, "adapts". For a while, the term "male violence against women" is abandoned in favour of "gender-based violence" (which is a term that is not particularly clear to the general public, whose awareness needs to be raised primarily), or just "violence against women". In recent years, the term "against" has just been removed and replaced by "towards", although in technical terminology, in the field of understanding the legality of oppression, there are terms "power for" and "power with" (as a positive expression) and "power against/over" (as negative, violent) – while the so-called power towards does not exist (from which "violence towards women" is derived). But all this is visibly making the messages advocated by some women's organisations softer. It is also the case that this softer language is preferred by the government, which then adopts it.
- e) There are not many women's organisations that raise their voice against hooligans, right-wing, authorities when they violate human rights. Patriarchal pattern of self-censorship.

Your reflexion, suggestions:

Case study 5:

Attitude to daily politics

- a) Challenges are posed by the government, because a strong women's movement, a strong non-governmental sector do not suit it. The response of women's organisations to this varies. Depending on the policies of organisations, their closeness or distance from the government varies.
- b) The first is the cooperation between the public and non-governmental sector in order to realise the best interests of socially marginalised groups, whose human rights are the mission of NGOs.
- c) The second concerns the importance given to one's organisation through the illusion of having impact on high-level policy, and, to put it mildly, this results in a confusion as to what the concrete results of this are.
- d) Employment of women's organisation members in government institutions has also been noted, with an explanation that the aim is to ensure that feminist policies are implemented there, but in fact, the government is fundamentally not interested in feminist policy.
- e) The trend of establishing connections with political parties also raised the issue of the phenomenon of civic vs. national option.
- f) A trend of supporting a particular political option as long as it meets one's expectations, often by offering "small mercies". Or, "on time" drawing the attention of the political option that may come into power.
- g) Options under c-f above may manifest under "the right and the freedom of different opinions", which are essentially the opposite positions, the opposite values.
- h) The stated organisations' orientations send a strong message to all members of the organisation. Although it is often said that women's organisations seek to establish a concept of power other than patriarchal, often some of these main messages promote "powerful women", which leaves others with the following choices: the desire to be close to the centre of power, fear, narrow space to express a different opinion, sometimes only personal gain, criticism, etc.

Example: In our country and the region of the former Yugoslavia, in 2021, the statements of daring women who are survivors of sexual violence and talked about it as part of high-profile criminal proceedings resonated powerfully, while thousands of women did the same through social networks. We also have an example in our country that an organisation was founded to help women who experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. Unfortunately, in self-organisation aimed at helping others, personal experience is not enough, so this organisation has before it a lot of learning on how to establish and develop a responsible organisation. During the course of the trial against the offender (a politician) who engaged in protracted sexual harassment of the organisation's founder while she worked in the local self-government, her lawyer was an official of a political party who had acted for years as a defence lawyer of the persons accused of sexual abuse of children. He humiliated a member of our organisation who appears on behalf of ITC in the criminal proceedings, representing the professional opinion of our Team in the capacity of an expert witness following psychological assistance provided to a child survivor of sexual violence. The political party of the previously mentioned lawyer benefited from the publicity through this high-profile case.

Your reflexion, suggestions:

Case study 6:

Ethics within ethics

- a) Feminism is an “umbrella”/ a common denominator of this ethical issue.
- b) A public statement whether you are a feminist/ feminist organisation - yes or no?
- Is this a matter of “context” for you?
 - What are the expectations of the organisation from its members?
 - Do you communicate to each donor that you are a feminist organisation? Or you are not, so you do not?
- c) Feminism and diversity.
- Do you really have members in your organisation who are women with disabilities, Roma women, LBT+, and other women from different marginalised groups, and in which positions in the organisation?
 - If your organisation is led by women from these groups and organisation is committed to working with the stated groups, are there women from the dominant social group in your organisation and in which positions are they?
 - Do you believe that a right-wing person who advocates different -isms (nationalism, fascism, xenophobia, misogyny, homophobia, etc.) can be a feminist? Are those the same values?
- d) The misogyny within women’s organisations.
- Organisations are not immune because they often depend on the patriarchal leadership pattern.
 - Possible pressure on sexual identity (although society most often discriminates against women who are not heterosexual, in organisations sometimes it is not “in” to be straight)
 - Other abuses and humiliation.

Case study 7:

Money

a) What money brings to the organisation:

- Inside the organisation
- In communication with the outside world.

b) Some possible consequences:

- Is the organisation open to new members?
- Is the team for the implementation of each (paid) activity/project freely established, can any member participate in it if she has the knowledge and experience to implement it?
- Do all members of the organisation have access to all information about money?
- Do all members of the organisation know who decides about money, who has physical access to money and to what extent and how is this process open to them?

Case study 8:

Vision and analytical capacity

- a) Throughout our lives, each of us learns strategies that help us in difficult times. However, they may prove not to be enough, because the experience of working in women's organisations suggests that we must continue to develop and include diverse strategies to deal properly with uncertainty and often sudden and unexpected changes.
- b) Do you understand the importance of planning correctly? And the importance of long-term planning?
- c) Can you see the bigger picture?
- d) Can you think outside the box?
- e) Within your Strategic Plan, are there individual development plans for organisation members that precisely support the objectives of the long-term strategy?

- f) How do I see my organisation now?
- g) What is my concrete contribution to the organisation?

- h) My contribution to teamwork:
 - My strengths
 - What do I need to improve in terms of my ability to participate in team work?

- i) How do I assess the current situation in the organisation? **Analyse.**

- j) The strengths of my organisation. **Analyse.**

k) What are the difficulties in the organisation:

- How are they usually resolved?
- Suggestions: "If someone asked me, I would resolve the issues..." (how?)

l) My individual development plan:

- In what area would I like to develop professionally?
- What do I need for that?
- How do I make sure this is achieved (specify concrete steps and timeframe)?

m) Question for all members of the organisation:

- Who will learn about organisational development and organisation management as part of their individual development plan?
- Do you have the opportunity to use your own resources, such as several members of the organisation who understand the organisation's policy and philosophy, the principles of women's self-organisation, the issue that represents the organisation's mission?
- Or is it necessary to hire someone who will come in as a new person who works in the field of HR?

n) The vision of the organisation in X years (depending on the years of experience in the organisation and the stage of organisational development, define for exactly how many years you can realistically formulate a vision)

- What programmes will the organisation have? Reality check in terms of what the organisation can do with available capacity. **Analyse.**
- My place.
- How to run an organisation? **Analyse.**
- Pitfalls we wish to avoid. **Analyse.**
- Always think about what this process can bring. **Analyse.**

Case study 9:

What is a quality action plan (organisation level)?

- a) Define the vision the organisation wants to achieve in its own development in the next X years, strictly adhering to the organisation's mandate.
- b) Develop a strategic plan for a period shorter than the one specified in the definition of vision.
- c) Provide to everyone in the organisation the current job descriptions of all members in order to assess jointly whether they are aligned with the Vision and Strategic Plan and support them.
- d) If necessary, review the existing job descriptions. In the process, for the sake of a broader picture, consult the CVs of all members.
- e) The new job descriptions should also include individual development plans in order to know in which areas each member will develop for the purpose of meeting the objectives of her job description well, but also contributing to the development of the organisation with the aim of implementing its Vision.
- f) Check if all necessary Policies and Procedures of the organisation are in place.
- g) Develop missing Policies and Procedures. Leave room for future amendments in line with new knowledge from the life of the organisation.
- h) Development of a mechanism / model for measuring the efficiency / performance / results of the members' work:
 - The mechanism/model should be integrated in the job classification.
 - The mechanism/model should include appropriate measures in case inadequate efficiency in the work and/or violations during work.
- i) For each item under a–h, define the timeframe for implementation. Deadlines should be realistic, but any delay raises the issue of commitment and sincere intention to achieve a positive organisational change. The process is not simple, but it can lead to significant improvements in the organisation. Owing to the participation of all members, they are given the opportunity to express their opinions and make decisions, thus establishing a sense of ownership of this process in each member, which later promotes the implementation of everything that was jointly agreed.

Your reflexion, suggestions:

Case study 10:

What is a quality action plan (programme level)?

- a) The programme team that is facing difficulties or stagnation should ask for external assistance in order to carry out an assessment/evaluation (depending on the development level of the organisation and programme and needs) as an initial step.
- b) Analyse the results of the assessment/evaluation within the programme team and invite some other members of the organisation to the discussion.
- c) The programme team should submit in writing a list of proposals for upgrading and improving the programme and work.
- d) The priority list includes the following:
 - It is necessary to raise, without delay, funds for a study visit to a relevant similar organisation abroad, during which the latest knowledge will be acquired on how a programme similar to the one the organisation is developing is organised, and then use that as an example of validation and improvement of work. “Open a window into the world”, do not isolate and do not go round in circles with your own experience, as this can increase frustration.
 - It is essential to start long-term HR planning without delay, with a focus on identifying and selecting quality staff.
- e) For each item under a–d, define the implementation timeframe. Identify the framework realistically and regularly monitor the implementation.

Your reflexion, suggestions:

Case study 12:**Role model of a women's organisation**

- a) Identification with familiar models of women's organisations.
- b) How many organisations are there with whose functioning you are very familiar?
- c) Are organisations open to showing you how they function from inside?
- d) If so, what did you learn from these insights? **Analyse.**
- e) If not, why do you think that is? **Analyse.**
- f) Describe what kind of women's organisation role model you would look up to.
- g) What does your organisation need to become like the role model described?
- h) What exactly are you going to do to achieve this and when?

Case study 13:

Members leaving the organisation

- a) What do departures say about us as an organisation? **Analyse.**

- b) What do they say about leadership?

- c) How does the organisation perceive such an outcome?

- d) How is the loss experienced?

- e) How do you work through a loss within the team?

- f) **Watch out for the domino effect: new departures, new conflicts.**

- g) Periodically do a regular assessment and analysis of both the situation and needs. After crisis situations, this needs to be done. Assess where the consequences of the crisis were felt. A crisis may be related to the content of work and/or organisational issues. It could be that one aspect affected the other. Often, the post-conflict situation can be resolved by drafting a series of procedures and other recommended steps.

- h) What has been learned from conflict? If communication is good, lessons learned will be reviewed. Sometimes it turns out it was a good thing that the situation happened at the specific moment, because it is an opportunity to introduce positive changes. Sometimes the concrete situation that occurred is a confirmation that the issue is too deep.

- i) Sometimes it is not advisable to keep organising new sessions to discuss constantly the conflict situation. Instead, it may be time to draft new Policies and Procedures based on this experience.

Some possible consequences:

- a) broken trust among members of the organisation
- b) it may be the issue of untimely resolution of difficulties, or excessive delay, which may lead to communication “with kid gloves”, ad hoc decisions or sudden/rash resolutions, so it is necessary to set timeframes for resolving issues in the organisation’s procedures (e.g. maximum 4 weeks)
- c) division among members – in the absence of other skills to deal with the conflict, the situation leads to taking sides, bonding or forming groups
- d) raising a dilemma whether any individual member is more important than the organisation vs. whether the wellbeing of the organisation is always above the interests of individual members
- e) division with regard to the role and manner of participation of members involved in solving situation
- f) paralysis due to the issue and constant “issue recycling”
- g) the choice of direction in which to continue is an expression of the maturity of the organisation which is able to understand the issue and its ability to leave it behind and to contribute actively to the subsequent process
- h) all members of the organisation now have the opportunity to help make a positive change and time will tell whether they will use this opportunity.

Your reflexion, suggestions:

Case study 14:**Team changes and organised handover**

- a) Handover needs to be organised when a new member comes in to take the place of the old member.
- b) What is the specific responsibility of the outgoing member of the organisation in terms of finalising work properly before leaving?
- c) How is a new member introduced into a new job?
- d) What are the expectations of her and in what timeframe?
- e) It is necessary to have a precise job description for the new member (which does not necessarily mean the format provided when advertising the vacancy, but detailed and complementary with all other job descriptions of the members).
- f) Who monitors the progress of the new member? This is a job for one person who is responsible for the continuity of the handover, induction, monitoring, assistance to the new members and reporting on her progress.

Case study 15:**Hierarchy and democracy**

- a) Hierarchy aimed at effective and efficient operation of work can be part of a democratic work environment. However, sometimes the administration of hierarchy gets in the way of democracy.
- b) Some possible consequences:
- communication paralysis (temporary or permanent);
 - failure to seek assistance in general or to seek assistance on time;
 - the members of the organisation have different personal attitudes to power, authority;
 - members have different capacity to conceptualise, i.e. some may recognise the issue and some may not;
 - members have different contextualisation capacity, i.e. some may see the big picture and put the concrete difficulty in the proper context and some may not;
 - abuse within the organisation.
- c) Trust is permanently compromised by any statement that you do not trust someone you work with, especially when it comes from a person who runs the organisation or is in another position of power.

Your reflexion, suggestions:

Case study 16:**Communication in the organisation**

- a) Necessary development of a communication procedure in the organisation.
- development and implementation of the procedure concerning the provision of information to the members, volunteers and external associates; who should be provided information, when, how and exactly what information should be provided on the situation where there are issues;
 - special attention to defining the line of communication between the members and the persons in managerial positions;
 - placing the Communication Chart in a visible place.
- b) Regular meetings of the entire organisation team and team meetings within specific programmes.
- c) Stop the practice of informal communication/spreading gossip. Gossip, or rumours, causes direct damage and each member is expected to refrain from it and communicate openly at regular team meetings. It is the personal responsibility of each member how she communicates and not to participate and to oppose gossip and other harmful communications.
- d) Depending on the size of organisation, improving regular daily communication through a bulletin among teams/programmes (e.g. obligation of each team/programme to provide written information on at least one achieved result every day). It is important to initiate communication through the bulletin without delay.

Your reflexion, suggestions:

Case study 17:**Personal and professional level of relationships intertwined among members of the organisation**

- a) In organisations that have a social mission, it is important to have a proper and deep understanding of the context in which the activity is performed. The two intertwined levels often have a positive effect, but could work in the opposite direction.
- b) There is a commitment among members to “changing the world”, and in this process it is common to form extremely close, intense relationships for the mission to be fulfilled – so it is important to organise learning how to deal with this phenomenon, as well as to include this topic regularly in supervision.
- c) The intertwined nature of members’ personal and professional development.
- d) The philosophy “we are not a company, we are there for women and children, this is our way of life, affiliation”. **Analyse.**

Your reflexion, suggestions:

Case study 18:**Boundaries**

When work quality and performance are not positive:

- a) “This is your issue, and this is an issue of the organisation.”
- b) Sometimes you have to say: “You have to leave the organisation.”
- c) The “we are all equal” trap, and we are not - each one of us has a job description and personal responsibility.

Your reflexion, suggestions:

Case study 19:

**We hold the planet up, it will collapse if we,
and not anyone else, are not there to hold it up (1)**

- a) (Excessive) workload and risk of fatigue, both among the members in managerial positions and those who are not, “we are in constant rush”, taking too much responsibility, objectively enormous workload. Factors can be: the specific topic on which the organisation is working, counselling and the complexity of trauma intervention requires additional psychological effort on the part of the organisation members, social circumstances that do not help - working in a political context with a feminist value system, calls/funding, projects...
- b) Risk of vicarious trauma.

Your reflexion, suggestions:

Case study 20:

We hold the planet up to keep it from collapsing (2)

- a) We have to give ourselves inner allowance that it is okay to reduce the number of programs or the volume within individual programs and set a narrow focus of work so that all programs could be uniform in their high quality.
- b) What precisely is the mandate of your organisation?
- c) What do you want to achieve next year, in three and five years?

- d) What volume of activity is realistically feasible for the organisation? Detailed and careful assessment of own capacity. **Analyse.**

- e) How many separate programmes/programme units can realistically be implemented in your organisation over a long period of time? What programme unit is the priority? How many programme units in total can the organisation take upon itself and safely claim to have preserved the focus? **Analyse.**

- f) After, for example, 25 years of existence, how does the organisation avoid the identity of a lethargic dinosaur?

- g) The organisation should be a functional, operational unit. Mission-oriented, i.e. programme-oriented thinking, helps structure everyday tasks. Instead, if task-oriented and their completion may fragment the picture, lead to exhaustion until the big picture is completely lost. The primary orientation towards tasks as if they were the main goal can sometimes lead to a mistaken impression of an organisation as a successful company, because it “completes the tasks”. Instead, it is important to look constantly at the broader, big picture and analyse it to find a good balance between the orientation towards the implementation of the mission/programme and the orientation towards the process. When you focus on the process, you will recognise that it is necessary to take care of the group atmosphere purposefully, as without which there can be no quality work or positive results.

Responsible organisational development includes the attention to the mission/programme and the process of interpersonal relations, which must be well-balanced, while the attention to interpersonal relations certainly must not to become an end to itself.

Your reflexion, suggestions:

Case study 21:**Once again about the planet (3)**

- a) Work overload stifles innovation at work and causes departures from the organisation (“although they often complain about too much work, it becomes part of the choice and part of the identity, it increases the importance of people who are “constantly busy” and brings other self-fulfilling prophecy”).
- b) Preparation of individual development plans for each employee, their alignment with the organisation’s Vision and needs, and acting in compliance with development plans.
- c) Making efforts to raise funds in short and long term to create new jobs (looking for options by thinking outside the box).
- d) Designing ways to motivate members directly addressing the presented issue of overload (in other words, this means that the increase in wages, for example, does not solve the announced problem).

Your reflexion, suggestions:

Case study 22:

Organised care for members of the organisation

- a) Exposure of members in the community.
 - Exposure level.
 - Potential risks due to activism, the issue advocated by the organisation.

- b) Are the members of the organisation at risk due to the organisation's activities?

- c) Is the risk openly discussed in the organisation?

- d) Are you allowed to show that you are afraid? **Analyse.**

- e) Who takes care of the members at risk (and all other members)?

- f) How is the care of the members organised?

Your reflexion, suggestions:

Case study 23:

The period of the COVID-19 pandemic and the members of the organisation getting to know each other from a different perspective

- a) Personal view of the disease and the contagious disease. Personal ways of coping with contagious disease pandemic. A pandemic is a new life experience for most of us.
- b) Crisis management. **Analyse.**
- c) A pandemic exposes personal views. The attitude towards vaccination is just one topic.
- d) Trust in the organisation. **Analyse.**
- e) It is necessary constantly to talk, identify and name the atmosphere in the group.

Reminder: at the time of crisis, the organisation may have the characteristics of a self-help group.

Your reflexion, suggestions:

Case study 24:**Organisation's autonomy before donors**

It is necessary to:

- a) Continue working on diversifying sources of financing in order to preserve the philosophy and policy of the organisation.
- b) Ensure the continuity of financing from different sources, as this status provides opportunities and sets boundaries to individual donors.

Your reflexion, suggestions:

Case study 25:

Lifelong learning

- a) Organisational development is an area that requires learning. Experienced knowledge is not enough.
- b) Organise, without delay, participation in **quality** training programmes on leadership. This is not just a topic for members in managerial positions, give all members an opportunity to learn. This can change the dynamics of the group, understanding that all members bear responsibility for the organisational climate. When they all have a higher level of knowledge about governance, it is demystified. There is also an opportunity for some members to become additionally interested in further learning about human resources and start taking initiatives in different ways.
- c) Pay special attention to new members and organise how they will learn about a feminist approach to work with women and children.
- d) Organisation of study visits to similar organisations in the country and abroad in order to gain insight into current work standards, innovations in similar programmes, and exchange experiences. Without these kinds of opportunities, there can be no deep improvement.
- e) Content learned through training and/or self-education should be regularly presented to all members at team meetings (not “keeping” it to oneself).
- f) Organise special time to build and raise the capacity of members during regular activities that foster team cohesion with a view to continuously developing trust and collegiality.

Your reflexion, suggestions:

Case study 26:

A projection of bright future

We suggest you create a projection, an image of your organisation's future. This may be for a period of, for example, the next five years, according to your assessment, based on the years of experience of your organisation and the stage of organisational development.

Avoid providing politically correct answers. You are looking for answers for yourself.

1. Human resources in your organisation.

- Competitiveness in the market: the scene where women's organisations exist and operate is largely characterised by market conditions. **Analyse.**
- How to attract members: what profile does the organisation need?
- Quantity and quality: how many members of the organisation are there realistically and what profiles are needed to do the work?
- Support of family and friends: do you have it and to what extent?
- When was there more support, earlier or now?
- Do you expect more support in the future?
- Professional development within your organisation. **Analyse.**
- Group dynamics, atmosphere in the organisation, interpersonal relations. **Analyse.**
- Members' departures and what they say about the organisation. **Analyse.**
- How to retain the members?

2. **The policy of your women's organisation.** **Analyse** the characteristics of your policy and the community response to it.

- The social issue you are dealing with. **Analyse** everything that arises in the course of your discussion.
- Your organisation's attitude towards the government, local authorities. **Analyse**.
- Relationship with other women's organisations. **Analyse**.
- The link between your organisation's policy with the organisation's sustainability: what policy supports or hurts sustainability?

3. Money

- What is your long-term strategy for organisation financing?
- Sources of finance. **Analyse**.
- Diversification of funds: who do you receive money from? **Analyse** everything that arises in the course of your discussion.
- Self-financing component: what knowledge and skills do you possess that can help you achieve the sustainability and greater independence of your organisation? Is there a service that you can provide that is compatible with the organisation's values and policies that you can charge for in order to increase your competitiveness in the market?

- Donor context: how well do you know it, do you have access to relevant information and what does that depend on? **Analyse** everything that arises in the course of your discussion.
- Dependence on the donors: “time in between projects”.
- Own premises: if you do not have them, how do you get ownership?

4. The public image of your organisation.

- **Analyse** the current image.
- Articulate what kind of public image you want to have.
- What exactly is your strategy to achieve this image?

5. The connection to the women’s movement.

- Are you part of the women’s movement now?
- We are aware that there are many discussions: “movement” as an abstract, sometimes unpopular word, whether in our country self-organisation has (ever) reached the level of movement, whether you think about the movement at the level of our country, regionally, at the international level...
- If we colloquially adopt this term:
 - In your opinion, what is needed for/in the women’s movement now?
 - Sustainability, of course, but what else?
 - Are organisations a priority to themselves or is their priority the movement?
 - What kind of women’s movement do you want to be a part of in the future?

- Will your organisation contribute to the **development** of the movement or not (this does not refer to participating in actions/campaigns organised by women's organisations)?
- Who prioritises the movement?

The proposal is that the next **exercise** first be done by each member of the organisation by herself, to write down the answers, and then the group will discuss the answers that may lead to the joint position of the organisation (or maybe not, depending on how much experiences and positions converge).

- a) How old are you personally going to be in 2022 and 2025?
- b) Do you expect that in 2025 you will have the same support of persons close to you for your involvement in the organisation, more support, or less?
- c) How old will your women's organisation be in 2022 and 2025?
- d) In your opinion, will women's organisations in our country be closer to each other or further apart? State your opinion and assessment first for 2022 and then for 2025. State your reasons for your opinion.
- e) What interest brings women's organisations together? In 2022? In the future (2025)?
- f) What do you expect from women's organisations in 2025?
- g) Do you expect to remain active in your organisation in 2025?

Supporting questions facilitate the consideration of the above areas (1–5):

- a) Your organisation's current offer for:
 - citizens (and what are their expectations from your organisation?)
 - professional community, including decision makers, and policy makers (and what are their expectations from your organisation?)
 - donor community (what do you bring to the donor community and what are its expectations from your organisation?)
- b) What policy do the three target groups listed above expect from your organisation? **Analyse.**

- c) How satisfied is your organisation with who represents women's organisations in the public (referring to "faces of women's organisations" on the basis of whom the public forms an opinion on the work of women's organisations)?
- d) Do you have a role model among women's organisations to look up to?
- If you have, what criteria have contributed to that organisation becoming your role model?
 - If you do not, why do you think that is?
- e) Which of the above areas do you consider the most important to your organisation and why?
- Human resources
 - Organisational policy
 - Money
 - The public image of your organisation
 - The connection to the women's movement
 - (feel free to add one or more areas which you recognise at the system level as a resource for your organisation and which are not already represented as a sub-topic within the areas listed)
- f) Which of these areas do you devote the most time to as an organisation?
- g) What is the most difficult thing for your organisation? (The response may refer to the above areas and/or contain something else).

Conclusion

The process of filling in *the Workbook* may show that it is not easy to visualise the future of one's organisation. Sometimes it is not easy to face the current situation in the organisation, because it can indicate certain gaps in the past or present. It often happens that the topics proposed here have not been discussed in this way by organisations, with full awareness, as they may not have been recognised. This is an opportunity to dedicate ourselves to them together and to keep returning to them, in order to recognise what further learning needs to be organised in order to ensure improvement.

Professional development is the key to the development of women's organisations. It encourages organisations to acknowledge their own excellence and to be recognised and acknowledged by the community. For some sub-topics discussed here, members were sometimes unaware of their impact on the lives of women's organisations (that they are part of the business culture, market competition where it is necessary to be competitive, self-finance applied to women's organisations, etc.).

It is often learning and practice that arise as the greatest need in organisations. It is not easy to see the big picture, achieve introspection, self-analysis, critical analysis, and do so with full awareness and appreciation of the diversities that are part of your organisation's identity. Learning sources can also be organisations from other countries whose work you are truly familiar with and whose work you respect. The success of your mission will thus also increase, especially with regard to the attitude change of your target groups – achieving attitude change is most frequently a part of the mission of all women's organisations active in the field of (sexual) violence.

In this publication, it may seem like everything is in the process because it may be so. When we learn from each other, that is the value added. Learning also stimulates constructive search for a women's organisation's place in society and reduction of the risk that the organisation could become isolated, manifests self-fulfilling prophecy, etc. The most important lesson learned we wanted to share with you is how important it is not to close off when there are difficulties. Quite the contrary, the solution is to open up and seek help that can come from outside to reflect together.

LITERATURE

- www.incesttraumacentar.org.rs and www.ijasamuztebe.org.rs .
- 2021©Incest Trauma Center – Belgrade; Survey Report: Social Position, Experiences and Strengths of the Women Human Rights Defenders Active in the Field of Sexual Violence.
- 2021©European Women’s Network against Sexual Violence; Guidelines for Quality System of Internal Governance.
- <https://ovc.ojp.gov/program/vtt/introduction> Office for Victims of Crime of U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.
- 2020©Incest Trauma Center – Belgrade; Advocacy and Lobbying Pack: Use your authority and support the return of the Educational Packs for learning on Child Sexual Abuse in Serbia.
- 2019©JDI: The Massachusetts Coalition against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence; Meeting the Needs of Survivors and Communities Through Organizational Development: A Review of Capacity Building Resources and Opportunities for Sexual and Domestic Violence Programs in Massachusetts, US.
- 2017©Incest Trauma Center – Belgrade; Meeting International Standard of Competency in Child Protection Training; For Trainers Active in the Field of Sexual Assault.
- 2016©Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence; Core Standards for Rape Crisis Programs in Ohio, revised edition.
- 2016©National Children’s Alliance, US; Snapshot 2017: Advocacy, Efficacy and Funding of CACs.
- 2012©National Sexual Assault Coalition Resource Sharing Project; Core Services and Characteristics of Rape Crisis Centers: A Review of State Service Standards, second edition.
- 2009©Incest Trauma Center – Belgrade; Movie “Have I Told You I’ve Been Abused” (93 min.)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULqZ7-n51s>
- 2010©Peter Honey Publications; The Learning Styles Questionnaire, 40-item version.
- 1994©The Western Regional Children’s Advocacy Center, US; Organizational Development for CACs.
- 1994©National Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers, US; A Guidebook to Establishing a Children’s Advocacy Center Program, Best Practices, second edition.

We Can Do It!



www.incesttraumacentar.org.rs

www.ijasamuztebe.org.rs

www.reactagainstsexualviolence.org

www.reactagainstsexualviolence.org/regionalna-novinarska-mreza/

www.facebook.com/europeanwomensnetwork/

www.instagram.com/react_against_sexual_violence/

Incest Trauma Center - Belgrade

E-mail: itcentar@EUnet.rs



www.incesttraumacentar.org.rs



**EU TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
TO CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS
IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY**



**RECONSTRUCTION
WOMEN'S FUND**