Assessment of the Women to Women & Children Program in Macedonia

June 1999

By

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Introduction

There is no question that the CPWC is doing great work with children, and that it is an initiative worthy of USAID DCOF funding.

In a context such as Macedonia, where CPWC exiles are struggling to maintain services to refugee children and women, it is no simple task to assess institutional capacity. This task is rendered more complex when, allegedly, only half the CPWC leadership is available for discussion. Sevdije Ahmeti remains in Pristina. There is some disagreement about whether CPWC is led by Vjosa Dobruna, or whether the leadership is shared between Dr Dobruna and Ms Ahmeti. Dr Dobruna is unequivocal in her assertion that she is the only leader. This view is strongly contested by several NGO representatives that have worked closely with CPWC in Pristina, and by Ms Ahmeti's son, currently working with DoW in Skopje.

In any event, and tellingly, Dr Dobruna refers to the temporary HQ in Tetovo as 'my center', the staff as 'my girls', and to Ms Ahmeti as 'my documentalist'.

Perhaps this is classic NGO stuff. In some ways Dr Dobruna manifests many of the tendencies of NGO founder's syndrome. She is charismatic, opinionated, articulate, deeply committed, courageous, and she inspires powerful reactions wherever she goes. Her staff revere her. She has made as many enemies as friends. Is this a typical prognosis for premature burnout, internal conflict, high staff turnover, and institutional collapse?

To add fuel to these institutional flames, Dr Dobruna is international humanitarian flavor of the month. She is about to be named Woman of the Year in Italy, has recently been interviewed on BBC World's 'Hard Talk', met with the US First Lady, appeared on 'CNN's Larry King Live' and has made a host of other media appearances. She, and the cause she is fighting for, are finally getting the attention they merit. Feted by ministers, besieged by journalists, and solicited by donors, any NGO leader could be forgiven for losing their head in such circumstances.

Dr Dobruna is unique in that she is not overly affected by the media attention currently being showered upon her. She knows the interest is transitory, and she is taking it for everything it is worth. She knows that many of the funders will walk away as soon as the journalists lose interest in Kosova and its impending liberation. In this sense she is uniquely equipped to survive and prosper. Institutionally she does need help. But does she want it? Can she use it?

Any assessment of institutional needs in the context of NGO development, must also be an assessment of wants. The assessor may determine that the prospective grantee will require a range of OD inputs in order to bring it up to speed, to service donor reporting requirements, and to optimize its sustainability beyond project funding. Understandably, in the white heat of emergency, Dr Dobruna's vision for the future of CPWC has yet to be fully formulated. But all the assessment

in the world means nothing if the assessed do not want what we think they need. Dr Dobruna knows she needs help, but it is going to take much more than a single consultancy visit to help her identify how she wants to develop her organization. And nobody is going to tell her.

> ‘I want to be in the first tank that crosses the Macedonian frontier into Kosova’.
>
> ‘I want every town in Kosova to have a Women’s Center. And I want every village to have a space for children to play’.
>
> ‘It’s true. The name is too long. OK, from now on it’s called the Women’s Center’
>
> --Dr Vjosa Dobruna, Center for the Protection of Women and Children

Summary

A Center is not an NGO
The Center for the Protection of Women and Children is not, within the parameters of any institutional assessment, an NGO. Nor was it during its initial years in Pristina. The 'Center' was, and remains a Project, or more particularly, the core of a series of interrelated projects serving its target clients. The name itself speaks volumes about the thinking that has led the work so far.

And an NGO is not a personality
Vjosa Dobruna is clearly an extraordinary woman, with a powerful sense of mission. She is an effective advocate for the cause of women and children in her country, and she inspires both respect and loyalty from her team. In many respects she is a classic NGO leader, whose energies are directed almost exclusively towards service to clients, and advocacy for her cause. The CPWC seems to be dependent on her leadership to the extent that it could not function without her.

Who leads?
There is some disagreement as to the nature of the leadership of CPWC. Vjosa Dobruna characterizes herself as the founder and leader, with a team of three Coordinators. Others close to CPWC characterize the leadership as being shared by both Dr Dobruna and Ms Ahmeti. In any event there seems to be a problem; there are political differences between the two women, notably in their differing views about the LDK.

This assessment may be missing significant information about CPWC's institutional capacity because of the absence of Ms Ahmeti.

People and organizations change because they want to or because they have to. Does she want to?
An organization with a future cannot be run exclusively on euphoria, anger and courage. This assessment determined that Dr Dobruna has identified some areas where she could use technical assistance to grow her 'organization'. But she has not formulated an institutional vision for the development of what could not even loosely be described as an 'organization' or even a 'movement'. Her vision is almost exclusively operational, and project led. She knows what projects she wants to launch in the coming three years. But the mechanisms and structures required to achieve her goal, and to build a foundation for managed growth, are almost an irrelevance in her mind. The current approach could be characterized as follows: We care, we have friends, our cause is right, and moreover, we managed before with empty hands, long before the funders 'discovered' us.

However, Dr Dobruna is just beginning to realize that one person (two?) cannot shoulder all the

burdens of leadership, advocacy, fundraising, reporting, budgeting and accounting. She currently perceives the proposed DCOF TA support for a strong NGO more as a way to unburden herself of an impossible workload, than as a strategy for *institutional* strengthening and sustainability. She is not yet at a point where she can fully perceive the benefits of an institutional structure as being intrinsically useful tools for the development of a strong, sustainable organization.

An operational exception in the Balkans

CPWC offers a therapeutic model of psycho-social support that is not handicapped by the analytical, communistic thinking of other professionals in the region. This, according to several expatriate interlocutors, is because the enforced marginalization of the Kosovars, and their refusal to participate in the Yugoslav health care system, obliged health professionals to be entrepreneurial and to acquire skills and experience from other sources, particularly in the west. Hence, much of their psycho-social work with children is already comparable with western models.

The only game in town?

Other Kosovar initiatives are providing support to refugees, but according to KTK and other current donors, few offer the quality or impact of CPWC . Some Kosovar agencies are inactive. Key players include the following:

- Sister Qirasi (Psycho-social support to refugees)
- Dr Flora Borina (currently in jail in Pristina)
- Center for the Development of Civil Society (inactive)
- Dodona Cultural Center (inactive)
- Mens Sana (psycho-social support and trauma counseling to refugees in Tetovo, registered through the Macedonian Red Cross)
- Association for Mental Health Care (semi-commercial operation)

The CPWC is still unregistered in Macedonia. And it won't happen through the League of Albanian Women

Vjosa Dobruna is reluctant to register CPWC through the League of Albanian Women in Macedonia because she feels the organization is demanding an unacceptably high cut of her funding in return for the favor. Registration through a Macedonian NGO also requires the payment of taxes, the employment of Macedonian staff, and the handover of all acquired equipment, cars and furniture to the Macedonian organization after CPWC returns to Kosova. Dr Dobruna has delayed a decision, and has lost funding opportunities as a result. But registration through an international NGO would give her the umbrella she needs, and eliminate the need to leave all her equipment, cars, etc. behind when she returns to Kosova.

The CPWC capacity problem cannot be blamed solely on the current crisis

OTI and other donors offered funding to the CPWC program in Kosova several months before the exodus of refugees. Tellingly, the Center did not follow up on OTI approaches. Research

from this assessment indicates that this is principally because of CPWC's lack of capacity to digest funding, and to report on it in a timely and effective manner. Other funders, including KTK, which has been in close association with Dr Dobruna for almost two years, confirm the need for a program of support for institutional development. In the short term KTK perceives the priorities to be:

- Registration, preferably through an international NGO
- Accounting capacity
- Project Proposal preparation
- Project reporting

This assessment concurs with KTK's view.

Hands-on, ongoing organizational support and OD consultancy is needed urgently
CPWC currently provides services in one refugee camp (Neprostan), and support to host families. Dr Dobruna's protracted absences, coupled with the absence of alternative representation, result in decision-making on important operational and administrative issues being deferred and delayed. The lack of official registration means that the CPWC is insufficiently equipped to promote its needs, its interests or to launch new initiatives, regardless of whether funding is available or not. This situation further exacerbates the perception that the organization is overly dependent on its leader. Dr Dobruna recognizes this problem, but feels inadequately equipped to respond to it. The prognosis for significant change is poor without the rapid intervention of a skilled Manager who can deputize for the leadership, and take responsibility for key organizational issues during the coming weeks and months.

IRC may be the vehicle for registration, funding and technical support
Diane Johnson of IRC and Dr Dobruna have responded positively to the suggestion that CPWC register as a project of IRC in Macedonia. IRC may also be an appropriate channel for funds through its sub-grant to community initiatives. IRC would further benefit from the recruitment of an Organizational Development specialist, who could be mandated to provide monitoring and technical assistance to CPWC in addition to other IRC sub-grantees. IRC has not responded definitively in this regard, but the possibility is worth pursuing through Bob Turner in Skopje or via Buck Northrop, Barbara Smith or Gerry Martone at IRC in New York.

Current Funding, In-kind Support, and Projected Funding for CPWC

OTI:	Office equipment
Presidential Grant (USA):	Car/s and insurance ($40,000)
Mercy Corps:	Furniture
Doctors of the World:	Equipment, conditional on USAID reallocating Kosova funding for expenditure in Macedonia ($115,000) Equipment for the launch of three new Women's Centers in Kosova ($255,000)
Kvinna Till Kvinna (Women to Women, SIDA framework organization):	Rehabilitation of Tetovo temporary HQ ($5000) Program costs (Rent, electricity, 9 salaries) Proposal for $36,000 operating costs for three women's centers.
ECHO:	Program costs (2 salaries for one year)
Caritas Vienna:	1 car
DFID:	Offer of a car, conditional on registration in Macedonia
Spacia Publico della Donne di Bologna:	Project costs for single mothers project ($11,000)
Star Learning Network:	Unknown

CPWC's total (approximate) budget for 1999 is $417,000

KTK intends to continue supporting 'some operating costs' for the coming four years.

Recommendations

Funding and technical support

The following proposed USAID DCOF (and ancillary) funding and TA inputs have been discussed with Dr Dobruna and are recommended:

1. Provision of a six month, full time consultancy input. ($25,000) (See proposed SOW, page 10)
2. Program funding for 50% of the CPWC psycho-social program for refugees in Macedonia. (approx. $60,000)
3. Funding availability for a to-be-submitted proposal supporting the return of Kosovar refugee children to their homes ($20,000)
4. Funding availability for a to-be-submitted proposal for the re-launch of the Center in Pristina. ($25,000)
5. Three OD backstopping, training and consultancy visits to Dr Dobruna and the senior management of CPWC (two in 1999 and one in 2000). 30 days. ($13,000)

Total estimated cost: $147,000

NB: Only one other current CPWC funder (KTK of Sweden), has expressed interest in supporting CPWC's capacity development, and may be willing to co-own and co-fund this effort.

Registration in Macedonia

Serious consideration should be given to the use of IRC as a registration facility through lawyer Zlatko Kovlaski. IRC should be approached for a formal notification of their willingness to facilitate registration as part of their program.

Continuity in Macedonia during and after the return

IRC's informal and to-be-confirmed offer of office accommodation in Tetovo should be followed up. During and after the return of Kosovar refugees from Tetovo, CPWC would then have access to IRC's office in Tetovo and would thus be better placed to plan for the transition.

Funding to CPWC

CPWC has a bank account in Macedonia, and DCOF may be willing and able to fund directly using this facility. If this is not considered a desirable option, then IRC should be approached as a vehicle for funding, via their community program. Funding could then be monitored by IRC staff, and compliance ensured re reporting guidelines.

Proposed Scope of Work for a TA consultancy to CPWC

The following is an outline for a proposed SOW, providing TA to the CPWC:

A six months placement is envisaged, where an expatriate NGO OD specialist, with strong strategic planning skills would work full time with the Center leadership and staff team. The placement would focus on two principal inputs:

1. Administrative and organizational support

- Establishment of a credible accounting and financial management system
- Preparation and submission of Project Proposals
- Preparation of project reports
- Development of promotional materials
- Assistance with the registration process in Macedonia
- Assistance in the establishment and management of the temporary HQ in Tetova
- Assistance in the establishment of performance targets for OD
- Preparation of Task Descriptions
- Liaison with international NGOs and funders in Macedonia in the absence of the Director

2. Skill building, training and consultancy

- Design of a strategic plan to achieve desired organizational aims
- Resolution of leadership and structural issues
- Project design training
- Resource development training
- Impact monitoring and evaluation training
- Donor servicing training
- Board recruitment and governance training

The consultancy would be completed by the submission of a report, outlining achievements, and providing recommendations on future OD strengthening inputs.

1. Proposed Candidate Profile

- Qualified and experienced OD expert
- Experience in the Balkans
- Practical hands-on field experience in management and leadership positions in NGOs
- Practical, hands-on experience of training and consultancy
- Rapid availability
- Female
- Willing and able to work in both Macedonia and Kosova

Program Schedule

June 1-7 1999

June 1
Travel to Skopje. Briefing with Frank Pavich and USAID Belgrade/Kosovo team.

June 2
Tetovo. Meeting at Tetovo CPWC with Sanije Veseli, Selime Nura, Samile Brovina, Fatlume Bujupi, Mehilate Juniku, Nora Shehu.

Field visit : Neprosten Refugee Camp. Group session with 20 children, facilitated by Melihate.

Field visit : Chagrane Refugee Camp. Meeting with refugee families. Meeting with Nexhat, refugee and worker with Norwegian Red Cross.

Meeting : Michael Jandl, Manager of Return to Kosova Planning Unit for CRS. Ph (070) 252 260

Skopje : Meeting with Ray Jennings and Jeanne Bourgault, OTI

June 3
Meeting with Ted Morse, Bridget Brink, & Anton Smith, US Embassy

Meeting with Karmit Zysman, NGO Consultant.

Meeting with Bruno Marques, Pharmaciens sans Frontières.

Meeting with Greg Hunter, Doctors of the World.

Meeting with Urim Ahmeti, Doctors of the World, son of Sevdije Ahmeti, co-founder and co-Director of the Center for the Protection of Women and Children

June 4
Meeting with Kerstin Grebäck, Kvinna Till Kvinna (Women to Women, Sweden)

Meeting with Vjosa Dobruna, Co-Director of the Center for the Protection of Women and Children

Meeting with Karmit Zysman, NGO Consultant
Discussion with Anthony Smith, DFID

June 5
Meeting with Diane Johnson, IRC, Manager, USAID grant for Community-Building Initiatives, and Vjosa Dobruna

Meeting with Vjosa Dobruna

June 6
Sunday

June 7
Debriefing with Frank Pavich and Bridget Brink

Travel to Nice

Assessment Scope of Work

1. What steps are necessary for the Center to become an effective NGO (e.g. receive funding, provide services, accountability etc)? How is the Center currently situated?

   Who is doing what, what is their history, their likelihood of success? How are they viewed by those they serve?

2. Set up an action plan for achieving results.

3. Identify a role for work that another capacity building NGO might provide, under other USAID funding, if necessary.

4. Identify a follow-up role that you might be able to perform, detailing expected results.