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**Participant Training Program in Europe
(PTPE)
A Group Exit Report:
Training in Treatment for Torture/Trauma Victims
Programmed by PIET**

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Exit Report

On a PIET Training Group: Treatment for Torture/Trauma Victims

This report is an assessment of a short-term training program provided to participants from Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina for training in treatment for torture and trauma victims. The report will discuss the satisfaction levels and quality of training provided to the short-term participants in this training programmed by the Partners for International Education and Training (PIET), under USAID's Europe Bureau Participant Training Program. This report examines the Exit Questionnaires received from twelve of the fourteen participants upon their program completion, and compiles, quantifies, and analyzes their observations and opinions. Conclusions are drawn and recommendations are made for improvement of the program.

Survey Instrument

At the completion of their U.S. training programs, all Europe participant training program students are surveyed regarding the programs in the general areas of: Predeparture Orientation, Logistics and Support Services in the U.S., English Language, Satisfaction with the U.S. Training Program and Internships, Understanding of the U.S., and General Appraisal of the Program and Recommendations.

Exit Questionnaires are mailed to participants at their respective training institutions just prior to the completion of their U.S. training programs. Participants complete the Exit Questionnaires and return them to Aguirre International in self-addressed stamped envelopes. Upon receipt of the questionnaires, Aguirre International codes and data enters the information into the Europe Information System (EURIS) database. In the case of this particular group, the questionnaires were distributed while the group was in Washington and completed and collected here.

Participant Profile

On December 17, 1993, twelve Exit Questionnaires were received from one man and eleven women who completed training under the PIET Buy-in Contract with the Europe Bureau Participant Training Program. These participants were from the countries of Croatia (5), and Bosnia-Herzegovina (7). The exiting participants received training in the field of treatment of torture and trauma victims.

Respondents to the questionnaires attended training sessions at the following organizations and training institutions between November 2 and December 10, 1993: Center for Victims of Torture - Minneapolis, Minnesota (23 days); Womankind Counseling Center - Concord, New Hampshire (2 days); Brockton V.A. Medical Center, Kennedy School of Government, Trauma Clinics, Cambridge Hospital - Massachusetts (7 days); and three days in Washington, D.C.

Orientation

Eleven of the twelve participants reported receiving an orientation prior to leaving their home country. The length of these in-country orientations was reportedly one day.

Nine of the twelve participants reported that they received an orientation upon their arrival in the U.S. The length of these U.S. orientations was reportedly one day.

Preparation for Training

The participants were asked to respond regarding their satisfaction with their preparation for training in several different areas. Overall, the participants were satisfied or very satisfied with many aspects of their orientation and preparation (see Table 1).

Orientation Topic	Satisfied/Very Satisfied	Number of Respondents
USAID Program Objectives	67%	12
Training Objectives	83%	12
Course Content	68%	11
Travel/Flight Schedules	92%	11
Advance Notice of Travel	75%	11
Stipends and Allowances	92%	11
Medical Insurance	90%	11
USAID Policies/Regulations	54%	11
U.S. Culture	92%	12
Cultural/Personal Preparation	100%	12
U.S. Political/Economic Institutions	54%	11
U.S. Educational System	30%	11

The areas of information on the U.S. educational system (30%), USAID policies and regulations (54%), and U.S. political and economic institutions (54%) received the lowest ratings of participants. Overall, however, when they left their home countries, 66 percent of the respondents felt "prepared" (58%) or "very prepared" (8%) for their training experience; one participant felt "somewhat prepared", and one felt "unprepared."

When asked what other information would have been useful to prepare them for their U.S. experience, ten participants responded:

- an earlier orientation (3-4 weeks prior to departure);
- a group meeting to discuss the program before traveling in order to allow sufficient time for adjustments to the program;
- more detailed information about course content, persons, and organizations involved in the training;
- more information about trauma-related psychological institutions and names of important professionals in this field;
- a more detailed itinerary;
- more information about the other participants;
- more meetings with other participants in the home country to discuss needs, common interests and possible fields of cooperation;
- more team building among the group; and
- a clearer specification of what USAID is, and what are its policies, regulations, and program objectives.

Program Planning

The participants were asked to give their appraisal of the amount and nature of their participation in planning their training programs. Only one participant said that she was involved in the planning of her program, and she was "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied" with her involvement. Six of the participants (50%) reported that their scholarship was initiated, promoted, or encouraged by their employer.

When asked if their training program was designed around their particular needs or interests, 25 percent responded "completely"; 17 percent said "a lot"; 50 percent said "partially", and eight percent said "not at all." They were also asked if the training program was specifically designed to meet the personnel or skill needs of their employers. Seventeen percent responded "completely"; eight percent responded "a lot"; 67 percent responded "partially", and eight percent said "not at all."

Logistical and Support Services in the U.S.

Participants were asked to rate how satisfied they were with various aspects of the support they received during their U.S. training program. Table 2 indicates their various levels of satisfaction with their support.

Support Service	Very Dissatis.	Dissatis.	Undecided	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Not Included
Training Facilities				92%		8%
Housing			8%	84%	8%	
Local Transportation		8%		50%	42%	
Stipend Amount				42%	58%	
Stipend Timeliness				50%	50%	
Medical Care				9%	36%	55%
Medical Insurance			8%	17%	50%	25%
Problem Resolution				33%	40%	27%

Overall, the satisfaction levels with the logistical and support services seem well within reasonable ranges. The only dissatisfaction was expressed by one participant regarding local transportation, but other participants expressed a great deal of satisfaction with the local transportation arrangements.

When asked to what extent they encountered any social or cultural adjustment problems, nine respondents (75%) said that they had no problems, and three (25%) said that they had some problems.

English Language

All twelve participants stated that they did not receive any English Language Training (ELT) as part of their program. Table 3 shows the extent to which students had difficulties with English.

Areas of Training	Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Very Frequently	Not Applicable
Lectures	75%	25%			
Reading Assignments	100%				
Writing	67%	33%			
Class Discussions	75%	25%			
Oral Reports	50%	50%			

Participants were asked if language problems substantially limited their ability to learn or contribute in class. Of fourteen participants responding to the question, five said "no", and seven said that they had no language difficulties, whatsoever.

When participants were asked if they had problems communicating in English outside of the classroom, six said "never", and six said "occasionally,"

Satisfaction With the U.S. Training Program

The participants were asked to rate several aspects of the training they received at U.S. training institutions or through U.S. organizations.

Aspects of Training	Very Dissatis.	Dissatis.	Undecided	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Not Applic.
Quality of Instruction			8%	75%	17%	
Preparedness of Institution				42%	58%	
Course Content	8%		25%	50%	17%	
Field Trips	8%		8%	33%	50%	
Computers Equipment			17%	17%	8%	58%
Consultations with Instructors			8%	34%	50%	8%

For the most part, the ratings of these participants were good. Only two people were dissatisfied, one with the course content and the other with field trips. There was only minimal indecision about the rating of Course Content (25%), Computers and Equipment (17%), Quality of Instruction (8%), and Consultations with Instructors (8%).

Training Objectives

All of the participants were able to articulate the objectives of their training program. When asked if they were able to achieve their objectives, eight percent said "completely"; 50 percent said "to a great extent", and 42 percent said "partially." Those individuals who said that they only partially achieved their objectives cited the following reasons: great range of themes, but not enough time to go deeply into any one area of the subjects, and not enough time.

Some of the unanticipated skills gained that were not expected included: knowledge about management, working with volunteers, collecting data about war crimes, strategic planning skills, and program evaluation.

Group Training

All of the twelve participants reported that they participated in group training programs in which the regular classroom instruction was designed for them. Fifty-six percent of the participants were "satisfied" with the group training, while 44 percent were "neutral" toward their group training program.

Participants pointed out some of the advantages of the group training: a) discussing a problem in a group of professionals enable the group to see it more widely; b) meeting with new people with similar problems; and c) the sharing of experiences; exchange of ideas, thoughts, and planning.

Some disadvantages were: different levels of knowledge made deeper discussions impossible; there was not enough time because of so much discussion; in professional interest the group was too disparate (some interested in research, others in administrative organization, and some to the clinical or therapy part); the training could not satisfy the specific needs of some participants.

One participant suggested that it would have been helpful if the group had worked with an outside facilitator to help them become a "real group" before the training began. Another suggested that in order to get deeper insight into specific topics, it would be better to divide the group into smaller sections according to the interests of the members. Still another recommended that the training be of longer duration — "one needs more time to process everything that was taught, to read the handouts, and to relax a bit."

Characterization of the Training

Half of the respondents felt that the training was at "about the right level" of instruction, and half felt that it was "too easy." Eight percent of the respondents felt that the length of their training

program was "about right," while 67 percent characterized it as "too short." Three participants (25%) responded that it was "too long."

When asked how they would compare the training received with what they expected, 17 percent responded that it was "better than expected"; 67 percent responded "the same as expected," and 8 percent felt that it was "worse than expected."

The participant who said that the training was "worse than expected" said that she had expected more of a skills development approach, exploring different techniques in therapy. She assumed that "training is mostly practice and much less listening to different lecturers, practical work, especially in the field of psychotherapy."

Employment Upon Return to Home Country

Ninety-two percent of the respondents expect to return to the same position of employment upon return to home country. Among the contributions they expect to make upon return, they cite the following: to improve operational procedures in their organizations; to initiate new projects or services; to influence or make policy; to train others; and to participate in research activities.

Multiplier Potential

Only 33 percent of the respondents (4) indicated that their training program was explicitly intended to help them train others upon their return to country, and all four participants reported that the training included activities designed to teach them to train others. Sixty-seven percent said that this was not the intention of their program.

Three respondents cited the program activities designed to help him or her train others: 1) short and long-term strategic planning, budgeting and fund raising, program evaluation; 2) NGO development; and 3) recruitment and training of volunteers.

Relevancy of Training

Participants were asked about the relevancy of their U.S. training to the situations and challenges in their own occupations and how useful the knowledge and skills they learned will be when they return home. Table 5 reports the responses to these questions.

Table 5 Relevancy of U.S. Training					
Area	Completely	A Lot	Partially	Not A Lot	Not At All
To Own Occupation	50%	42%	8%		
Usefulness On Return	25%	33%	42%		

In an open-ended question, participants were encouraged to list what else might have made their program more useful or relevant to their needs. Ten of the twelve participants responded. Among the items cited were: a longer planning process with USAID and PIET prior to departure; negotiation of expectations and clearer understanding of what to expect; having more information about the program and activities of the organizations involved in the program; group and team-building several weeks prior to departure; more practical training (especially in counseling and therapeutic skills); more workshops and roleplaying (in how to cope with war trauma when care providers are few and suffering from secondary traumatization and burnout; and more attention to dealing with mass trauma (community approach for refugees living in large camps).

Preparation for Return to Home Countries

Every participant made preparations for his or her return to their home countries. Among these preparations were: gathering resources to take home (92%), maintaining contacts with employers (55%), writing or revising resumes (46%), practicing job search skills (27%), preparing a work plan (73%), preparing presentations for communities (55%), and submitting job applications (9%). Three participants are preparing to go back to school upon return.

Understanding the U.S.

Among the goals of the Eastern Europe Participant Training Program are enhanced understandings of U.S. citizens, government, economic systems, and culture. The involvement of the participants in the U.S. experience is discussed in this section.

One of the respondents reported having an opportunity for a homestay with a U.S. family, but since it was for one day, it would not normally be considered a homestay. Ten participants said that they would have liked to have had the opportunity for a homestay with a U.S. family.

Table 6 shows the frequency of participant involvement in various activities while in the United States.

Activity	Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Very Frequently
Visit U.S. Family		67%	33%	
Meet Local Leaders		83%	17%	
Contact Private Sector Business	58%	42%		
Visit Volunteer Organizations		46%	27%	27%
Observe Civic Activities	75%	25%		
Attend Cultural Events		25%	58%	17%
Attend Religious Services	42%	42%	16%	
Participate in Recreation	17%	58%	25%	
Travel within the U.S.		75%	17%	8%

While these activities are not mandated by the Project Paper, it is anticipated that, because of the nature of this program, frequent opportunities for interaction will occur with U.S. citizens on many levels. It would appear that additional opportunities should be provided in order to increase the interaction of the participants with local leaders and civic activities.

Impressions of the U.S. People and Culture

The participants were asked to record some of the most important impressions that they gained about the people of the U.S. and life in the U.S. as a result of their training program. The following comments reflect their impressions in their own words:

"People are very friendly, open-minded, ready to help, and very curious about strangers — in a nice and polite manner. In their jobs, Americans are very professional, hard-working, and eager to learn more whenever possible. I was shocked to learn from the public radio about the level of violence American society is faced with."

"I read and heard a lot about the USA, their history, art, culture, nature, etc. Actually I am impressed how friendly, kind, and willing to help a lot of people are. Also I was impressed with the fact that a lot of people we've met have no idea where we are from, what is happening there, and how much our people and our countries suffer."

"The people are very open and friendly in everyday communication. They are mostly informal and not very much rigid."

"The people I have met are very friendly, understanding, open-minded, ready to help, hard workers, showing interest in our culture and what is happening in our country."

"Most of the people of the USA that I have met were very curious to know about events in my homeland. Some of them were ignorant, but ready to know more. The majority of them place their work in the center of their attention and put everything behind this important aspect of life. Success in their work means that they simply 'have to be better' than their colleagues. There is a lot of competition among colleagues. Americans are individualists, taking care of themselves first then others. They are very sociable, curious, and want to know many things about foreigners. Americans are familiar with cultural diversity and multiethnicity which is great, and they are much more tolerant with regard to respect of different races and colors than many other nations. Americans do not suffer from European arrogance, and do not suffer from European chauvinism. They do respect successful people whatever nation they might be. Americans respect tradition, religion, and culture, but they are not conservative. They believe in stereotypes and are influenced by their media. The media in the USA creates a picture of the world which the majority of Americans believe in unless they make an effort to find out for themselves."

"...eating doughnuts for breakfast...different culture (more open direct and often impolite and too personal)...well intended and curious."

"People are very friendly, ready to help in any moment, curious to listen about our situation and very patient in that. They are very open-minded, and I liked their ability to listen to different opinions. They are also very devoted (at least those we have met) to their job and very professional. Life in the USA could be nice — this is obviously a country of many opportunities, but I didn't like the low level of safety (i.e., high level of violence), and great social differences (I never saw such a lot of extremely poor and homeless people)."

"Very warm and friendly people, concerned for the situation in Croatia and Bosnia and Hercegovina, and very willing to help. Life seems much easier than back home — opportunities are huge!"

"People are very friendly, cooperative, and ready to help us. There is too much violence in American society."

"I have already been to the U.S. before, so nothing was new about it. This time I was glad to meet many people who sympathize with our suffering and feel frustrated not be able to do anything."

"I met American people for the first time in my life (in their own country). I was agreeably surprised by their openness. I was also surprised by their habits, in general, and I think that it

is quite normal. I was especially surprised by the fact that Americans live in very dangerous circumstances, and by the fact that they can, in any moment, be victimized."

General Appraisal

Benefits of the Program to the Participants

Twenty-seven percent of the participants rated the enhancement of their professional capabilities as the greatest benefit of the program. Twenty-five percent ranked career advancement and better job opportunities as great benefits of the program. Nine percent ranked the exposure to other cultures as their greatest benefit. Forty-two percent ranked professional contacts as the greatest benefit of the program.

Overall Satisfaction Level

On a five point scale, from "Very Satisfied" to "Very Dissatisfied", all but one of the respondents said that they were "very satisfied" (25%), or "satisfied" (67%) with the overall U.S. training program. One participant, who said that he was "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied," added that he was "satisfied with what I accomplished, but I could have accomplished more."

Recommendation of the Program to Others

Experience has shown that a participant's willingness to recommend the program to other individuals from his country is a good indication of his or her satisfaction with the program. In response to the question, "Would you recommend this program to other people from your country?", all twelve of the respondents (100%) responded "yes."

What did the participants like most about the U.S. experience?

The responses to this question were wide-ranging: American democracy; possibilities for education; kindness and openness of people; new professional and personal friendships with people who have similar goals; richer as a person by getting to know some very special people; opening of new perspectives; opportunities to improve knowledge and career; collected useful material for future work; opportunity to recover psychologically and escape for a while from the area where people are haunted because they belong to "undesirable" political and ethnic backgrounds; to see and meet American colleagues and learn about their theoretical and methodological approaches in psychological work; and the training ("pity we didn't have more time").

What did the participants like least about the U.S. experience?

The responses to this question were often quite personal: violence (several); the feeling of insecurity (several); crowded schedule with too many different topics; no real training — more conference type presentations; public transportation in Minnesota; little opportunity for free time outside of the lectures; the ignorance of some people; improvisation by people who were

supposed to be prepared for their lessons; political issues and misunderstanding the situation in Bosnia and Hercegovina; and the lack of time for more learning and leisure.

What would the participants do differently if they could design this USAID training program?

Although most prefaced their comments with positive statements about the program, all of the twelve participants responded to this question. In their own words:

"Participants of the training should meet each other before they go for training; they should have an idea what each of them do in their everyday work, and what interests they have in common."

"Lecturers should know as much as possible about the participants before they come, so that they do not take precious time for repeating data about themselves."

"There should be more opportunities for participants to choose the areas of training in which they are interested."

"More time should be provided for cultural events, visiting museums, art galleries, and concerts."

"More time should be provided to give an opportunity for the group members to get to know each other better."

"Divide the group of participants according to their professional interests into small groups with specific training goals (workshops for psychotherapists, management for participants who are concerned with organizational work, etc.)."

"Training for paraprofessionals should be organized in Minneapolis with included case presentation because Minneapolis has good voluntary programs. Therapeutic techniques for professionals should be organized in Boston."

"Spending more time with some institutions dealing with similar problems to be able to get more practical information and be able to use their experience more."

"The participants should spend time together before the training in order to know each other better and to get better insight into their respective jobs. A pre-training at home would have made the training in the U.S. more effective."

"The diversity of the group is an advantage and necessary, but the content, judging from the reactions of some participants, should have been tailored according to the specific needs of similar professions."

"More practical, less theoretical training."

"Not so many topics in such a short period of time, but just a few in order to have a chance to explore it deeper. More workshop type of training."

"Provide the group with 2-3 constant trainers who would get to know the group much better and get to know individual as well as group needs — an important part of creating group stability and cohesion."

"Rearrange the program to visit Boston first, then Minneapolis."

"More leisure time; the schedule is too tight (several)."

"Bring only people from NGOs for the training. Get them to meet together and talk about the program before departure. Prepare the itinerary well in advance. Inform the participants of the backgrounds of the people they are going to meet. Involve some more practical work in workshops. Enhance group work. Bring people from more similar backgrounds. Enable participants to see and learn more about American life and work. Make stronger connections of USAID with participants who finish their training. Help them in their immediate work."

"More time should be provided for filling out questionnaires like this one, not to give it to the group two days before leaving when the schedule is filled day and night and expect a correct evaluation."

Aguirre International Observations

This report is based on the responses of twelve of fourteen participants who have recently completed PIET programmed short-term training program and returned to their home countries. There are several observations and conclusions that can be drawn.

- One-day orientation programs are provided to participants in-country. Nine of the twelve respondents said that they received a one-day orientation in the U.S.
- Participants reported lower satisfaction levels with the orientation topics of U.S. political and economic institutions and USAID policies and regulations. The least satisfaction (30%) was expressed about the lack of information on the U.S. educational system.
- Ninety-two percent of the participants stated that they, nevertheless, felt prepared for their training program.
- Only one of the participants was involved in the planning of her program, and she felt "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied" with her level of involvement.
- Forty-two percent of the participants felt that their programs were designed around their needs, while 58 percent said that they were only partially designed to meet their needs.

- For the most part, participants were satisfied with their logistical and support services. The area of local transportation was ranked lowest, and two participants ranked housing and medical insurance in the undecided category.
- Three of the twelve participants (25%) encountered some social or cultural adjustment problems.
- Minimal difficulty with English language was reported in the areas of writing, reading assignments, class discussions, and oral reports.
- Participants were generally satisfied with various aspects of their training programs; two individuals were "very dissatisfied" about how they felt about the Course Content and Field Trips.
- Fifty-eight (58) percent of the participants said that they achieved their objectives "completely" (8%) or "to a great extent" (50%), while 42 percent "partially" achieved their objectives.
- Fifty (50) percent felt that the training was at "about the right level", while 50 percent felt that it was "too easy."
- Only eight percent felt that the length of their program was "about right", while 67 percent characterized it as "too short", and 25 percent said that it was "too long."
- When asked to compare the training received with their expectations, 84 percent of the participants responded that it was "better than expected" (17%), or "the same as expected" (67%).
- Eleven of the twelve participants reported that they would be returning to the same job that they held before the U.S. training.
- Ninety-two (92) percent of the participants felt that their U.S. training was relevant to their own occupations "completely" (50%), or "a lot" (42%). Eight (8%) thought that the training was only "partially" relevant.
- Participants had opportunities to participate in a variety of activities in the U.S. (visiting U.S. volunteer organizations and attending cultural events). Some participants reported occasional or no involvement with local leaders and civic activities.
- Ninety-two (92) percent of the participants reported that they were "very satisfied" (25%) or "satisfied" (67%) with their overall U.S. training program, and all of the participants would recommend the program to others from his or her country.

Recommendations

Although 92 percent of the PIET participants reported that they were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their overall U.S. training program, based on observations and conclusions drawn from the Exit Questionnaire data, the following suggestions and recommendations are offered to make the program even more valuable and useful to the participants.

- Thorough predeparture and orientation programs are fundamental to successful training programs. Every effort must be made to assure that each participant receives a predeparture orientation, especially in the areas of course content and USAID policies and regulations. Many of the participants felt a real need for an earlier orientation.
- It is recommended that participants selected for this kind of training program be brought together in-country, undergo some group-building exercises, learn about one another's backgrounds and strengths, provide some input into the specifics of the program being designed for them, and arrive at realistic expectations for the program.
- A more homogenous grouping of Trainees from similar backgrounds, experience, and educational levels would permit more in-depth training in their field of interest.
- While 58 percent of the participants said that they achieved their objectives "completely" or "to a great extent," and 56 percent felt that the training was at "about at the right level," only eight percent thought that the length of their program was "about right." This last observation should be balanced with the statement that 84 percent thought that the program was "better than expected" or "the same as expected." However, program managers may want to examine and review the amount of effort required by the program related to its time constraints. Participant statements repeatedly stressed the tight schedule and lack of time to relax and attend cultural activities.
- Ninety-two (92) percent of the participants deemed their programs to be relevant to their own occupations, and eight percent felt that they were only partially relevant. Relevancy of training is critical to the success of the training and has great implications for future impact. It is interesting to note that only 58 percent of the respondents felt that the training would be useful upon their return to country. This issue of relevancy should be addressed in collaborative program planning between PIET and the participant or the training organization and the participant.
- To the extent possible, the arrangements of homestays and visits with U.S. families would be welcomed by many of the participants (83%) and useful in increasing their understanding of U.S. life and culture. Arrangements for more interaction between private sector businesspersons, local leaders, volunteer organizations, and civic activities would also be useful to the participant's understanding of these U.S. individuals and institutions.
- The participants also recommended rearranging the itinerary of this training program, and their suggestions should be considered if this program is replicated.