

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AND PRACTICES INSTITUTE (SAPI)

ACTIVITY REPORT

2006

1. General information about SAPI's activities

In 2006 the SAPI team continued its work towards accomplishment of its goal and mission – to contribute to the social inclusion of vulnerable individuals, groups and communities by improving the quality of the social work with them. The contribution of our organization increased significantly both because of our organizational development and because of the change in conditions and opportunities for NGOs in the country. The efforts and enthusiasm of specialists and collaborators of the Institute, their number being doubled in the period under review, have been aimed at actually contributing to the successful accession of our country into the European Union. We ensure our contribution by:

- being conscious of the nature and of the accomplishment of the social policy and government's priorities in the field of social inclusion and social cohesion. Practically, SAPI is involved in setting and adhering to these priorities even when this requires participation in political actions. With its activities and projects and with the participation of its experts SAPI supports the implementation of the policy of reforms carried out by the government and by the MLSP, the SACP, the ES. As a result of the pressure exerted by the Open Letter prepared at our initiative and supported by 17 NGOs from the whole country, a serious move was made towards the deinstitutionalization of child care through the decentralization of the RCHCLRC;
- working for the recognition of NGO's role and place as a partner of equal value in the provision of social services to children and families at risk in cooperation with the local authorities in Shoumen, Pazardjik, Razgrad, Sofia, Novi Pazar, Pleven and Tryavna. We contribute to the networks we are part of, also by supporting various NGOs in order to develop their capacity as providers of social services to children and families;
- working as professionals and competent experts. At SAPI we have experts qualified up to European standards in the field of social work and management. Our team consists of one associate professor, two doctors, 12 Master's degree holders, more than 30 Bachelor's degree holders and specialists in the field of social, legal and economic sciences. In such a way, we guarantee quality of work and compliance with the European standards;
- continuing to introduce new practices and activities. It has already become a tradition at the organization to make something new every time – in training, in the work methodology, in the practice of interaction – groups for family planning with young mothers and fathers, for adopted and adopters; in 2006 new trainers in *resilience* conducted training all over the country to make specialists from the helping professions familiar with this new approach for working with people who have been through serious traumatic events in their life;

- developing our partnership with organizations from other EU member states and assisting for a better exchange of activities and practices. Our organization takes an active part in the activities of the SMES European network, successfully carries out exchange of best practices between SAPI and SMES Belgium; it is a partner of the “St. Cl.Ohridsky” Sofia University in an international project under the Leonardo da Vinci EU Programme; we initiate and participate in international events in the field of social work, social inclusion and social cohesion – joint projects, seminars, round tables;
- helping to change the mentality in our country towards respecting the law and rules. We do not use, encourage or allow corrupt practices both in our own work and in that with our partners. We apply the rules of competition, choice and discussion in all our activities.
- informing, warning of difficulties or lack of action in situations where there is a risk of criminal offence. We raise the problems as we see and understand them as a result of our work – the difficulties in applying the Child Protection Act related to the interaction between the CPD and the court, the CPD and the prosecutor’s office, mainly in the cases of child abuse, the resistance of many institutions and state structures towards the deinstitutionalization of child care; the difficulties associated to the reform in the field of juvenile justice and delinquency prevention; abuse of power by various governmental and local structures, etc.

2. Management of operations

The operational management of the organization is done by the Board of Directors (BD), which convenes at least once in a month. In 2006 we made a serious progress in the administration of activities since the general trend towards increasing the number of activities, as compared to the initial period of establishing SAPI, marked a peak during last year. We were forced to increase our administrative and management capacity without planning it. We definitely claim that we are trying to establish a spirit of interaction and partnership between the Board of directors and SAPI’s collaborators all over the country. The main principles which we try to stick to when managing our operations are as follows:

- Clearly delegating responsibilities and obligations on all levels of work – the head of the organization, the managers of programmes and projects, the project assistants, the experts and executors of activities. The financial management of projects is carried out and controlled by three cahiers-managers and one chief accountant. In 2006 three technical assistants worked with SAPI.
- Setting up mobile teams by projects or by activities. A manager and an implementation team are designated for every project or research initiative. Project managers are mainly members of the BD of SAPI, but not necessarily. Other collaborators may be involved too. Technical assistants are nominated according to the scope of activity. The team includes various specialists, with different tasks depending on the specificity of the project or the research initiative.
- Establishing distinct management structures at the Complexes for Social Services for Children and Families. We apply this principle of management at the structural units in Shoumen and Pazardjik. They are managed by directors and sector managers. If need arises, we set up mobile teams for solving ad hoc tasks of various duration. The role of project managers is to ensure implementation of the SAPI’s policy and methodology, as well as to guarantee involvement of the CSSCF teams in the creation of this policy and work methodology.

- Transparency in decision-making, teamwork approach. Team allocation of tasks and responsibilities for implementation. All decisions are taken applying the teamwork approach. We put best efforts to ensure that most of the decisions are taken together with the teams involved. This implies conducting many meetings and discussions of critical problems with teams from the various structures.
- Providing career development and support to every member of SAPI's team – the organization takes care of every team-member on the basis of the belief that the organization's success depends on the quality of teams. We can say, without exaggeration, that all members of the SAPI's operating team in 2006 were trained as per the specificity of their particular work (staff at the CSSCF, experts at the central office, financial specialists), as well as per the need of new work-related knowledge and skills as a result of our country's EU membership – training about the structural funds, organization and management, etc. These training activities were financed both through projects and by the organization itself.
- An approach of professionalism and quality of work – this approach is the major guarantee for the success of our organization and we stick to it, notwithstanding the expansion of activities. This often leads to overloading of the main team of experts and raises the issue of its expansion. In 2006 most of our efforts were directed to elaboration of a more accurate methodology of services, of professional documentation, service descriptions, job characteristics, regulations, etc.

In the organization and management of activities we faced both by difficulties and problems:

- The specifics of the work in an NGO often impede the application of the above-mentioned approach of clear differentiation of tasks and responsibilities. At the same time, and parallel to the regular tasks, some other responsibilities emerge, all urgent, often differing immensely in terms of contents of activity, which overloads the people and, in times, creates the feeling of chaos. We conducted series of meetings aiming to improve the internal organization of work, but we must put more efforts in this direction during the coming year.
- Giving a start of all services at the CSSCF in the town of Shoumen was very strenuous to the team and it has been met by the team members in a different way. But nevertheless, we think, we were able to keep the quality of work without overloading the people. Some changes were necessitated in the management of the CSSCF project in Shoumen and in the complex itself which caused certain difficulties. We managed to overcome these by applying the approaches of dialogue, teamwork and transparency. The problem with the management of CSSCF in the town of Pazardjik was not resolved till the end of 2006.
- Changing people in teams, although not so often, yet resulted in certain difficulties.

During the last two years the SAPI worked on three main programmes:

- “Increasing the capacity of professionals in the helping professions” programme
- “Development of social services for children and families” programme
- “Social work with law offenders” programme

3. “Increasing the capacity of professionals in the helping professions” programme

The programme is focused on enhancing the professional expertise in the field of helping professions and mainly of the social workers, pedagogues and psychologists. During this year we made efforts, as in 2005, to meet the training needs ensuing from the increasingly high

demand of *ongoing reforms* in all fields of social work in the country. These reforms are continuously going on in several key directions:

- Individualization of the work with clients and focusing on their needs and not on those of the institutions for social work and social services, as is the current practice in our country;
- Deinstitutionalization of care for people at risk and development of care in the everyday environment of the people;
- Multi-disciplinary team work and networking.

Here are the results achieved under this programme:

- Trained approximately 500 professionals;
- Provided individual and group supervision – over 1000 hours in total. The greatest share of supervision was provided within the scope of the Child Welfare Reform Project – “Help for the helpers” – CSSCF in the town of Shoumen – approximately 300 hours of individual and 20 hours of group supervision; CSSCF in Pazardjik – 260 hours of individual and 20 hours of group supervision, CSSCF in Stara Zagora – 250 hours of individual and 20 hours of group supervision. The supervision was aimed at providing help to the social workers and psychologists to put into practice the new methodology of work introduced through series of training activities carried out mainly in 2005.

In 2006 the SAPI team made serious efforts to disseminate a new approach to working with people who have experienced serious traumatic events in their life, the so-called “Resilience” approach. Using the “Innovative practices in the North Central Bulgaria” we tried to establish a network of specialists to become a key unit for development and promotion of this approach among all interested specialists all over the country. In pursuit of this task, in 2006 the following activities were undertaken:

- A competition carried out among leading specialists working with children and families for participation in the “Resilience” programme. In the competition participated 28 competitors from various organizations, NGOs, social services providers and state structures.
- The two planned training modules on resilience were delivered to 20 participants and the trainers Stefan Vanistendael and Michel Manciaux. Training events were held in Sofia and attracted phenomenal interest. As a result we have 12 trained trainers.
- Finished the joint work on the “Resilience Manual” in cooperation with the foreign experts Stefan Vanistendael and Michel Manciaux, as well as the planning of the forthcoming work on the dissemination of the resilience approach in Bulgaria. With regard to this a schedule was prepared for conducting 13 training sessions in resilience in Bulgaria by the trained participants.
- Child Research Laboratory “What do the so-called “delinquent” youths want to tell us?” This laboratory aims to be an instrument for professional support of specialists working with children and adolescents with behavioural problems. Most of the time it functions as an intervision group of social workers, pedagogues, psychologists, educators from various state and non-governmental organizations in Sofia – from the prison in the town of Sofia, the probation office, the centre for working with street children, pedagogical advisors at schools, from CPDs, etc. The group is made up of volunteers and meets once a month every first Monday. The group comprises 17 participants.

4. “Development of social services for children and families” programme

In 2006 the development of social services for children and families became a focal point in the work of SAPI. This programme has started as a result of an intra-organizational analysis which outlined two main directions:

- Piloting and developing the methodology of new alternative services for children and families which should, subsequently, be turned into resource centres for training, probation and re-qualification of specialists in the helping professions.
- Applying a quality approach in providing services and activities, working for their standardization.
- Approbation and standardization of a model for management of complexes offering polyvalent services.

Results achieved in 2006 under the “Development of social services for children and families” programme:

In 2006 SAPI won the tender for a service provider announced by the Municipality of Shoumen. A contract for providing social services to children and families in Shoumen was signed for a period of five years. At the end of May 2006 the project in Shoumen was in full swing. Also, in 2006 the greater part of the CSSCF project in the town of Pazardjik was fulfilled as well. As a provider of social services SAPI refurbished all premises in the buildings provided by the municipality for its direct work with clients. In such a way it became possible to work with children and parents in line with the main activities set in the terms of reference.

From the very beginning of the project the teams underwent the planned specialized training activities. In January started the individual supervisions. Every team member chose an individual supervisor. Social workers are supported by supervisions both from SAPI and from project partners. What is more, partners participate also in the delivery of particular services.

The Complexes for Social Services for Children and Families in Shoumen and Pazardjik implement activities in three main sectors: 1) “Family Support” Sector; 2) “Child Support and Services” Sector; 3) “Community Work” Sector. These sectors cover activities in the following directions: prevention, reintegration and direct work with clients, community-based services, as well as empowering and mobilising the local community in the provision of services for children and families. Both complexes have provided services to over 740 clients – children and families.

The “Innovative practices for the development of social services for children and families” project was financed by the OAK Foundation in November 2005. During the last few months of that year the project concentrated mainly on its design stage, while the full deployment of activities started in 2006. The project aims at establishing social services for children and families, the main focus being on the development of services for children victims of abuse and on programmes for people who have committed child abuse. The scope of activities seeks to ensure a complex consideration of the social services and locate the abuse in the context of an overall supporting system of services. The project will work with children from 0 to 18 years of age, as well as with their families and surrounding environment.

5. “Social work with law offenders” programme

The programme targets basically to support the on-going reform in the country in the field of juvenile justice. This goal is implemented through more specific activities aimed at supporting

professionals and facilitating the social integration and the process of change among young law offenders and children in conflict with the law through development and provision of social services.

In 2006 the implementation of this programme focused on prevention and services for support of *children and adolescents* with delinquent behaviour. Participation of our experts in the implementation of probation and treatment of adult law offenders was mostly incidental. The main reason is that the overall orientation of SAPI's activities is towards social work with children and families. It is necessary to describe here the activities under the "Family comes first" project in particular – Family group conference and school dropouts. The project was implemented on the territory of the town of Sofia , Slatina Region, in the period December 2005 – December 2006.

Carried out were 12 family conferences aimed at helping families cope with the child's dropout and its behavioural problems.

- About 23 professionals working with children and families in Sofia were acquainted with the method.
- Trained in conducting Family Group Conferences – 18 people.
- Improved communication between professionals working with children and adolescents dropping out of school and with delinquent behaviour – declarations of interest provided by several CPDs in Sofia.
- Introduction and testing of a new practice for work with families, focused on decision-taking by the family regarding the problem which has occurred with the child.
- Issued FGC Manual for professionals.
- Prepared two educational films for training of experts.

The SAPI undertook the commitment to conduct free of charge FGC upon request of the CPDs in Sofia throughout 2007.

6. International activities and partnership

The international partnership is one of the keys to success and true contribution to the European integration of Bulgaria. In 2005 SAPI established relations of partnership with an international European non-governmental organization, which has its seat in Brussels and encompasses approximately 15 countries, members of SMES – Europe. This is a network working on the issues related to the social integration of people with mental problems in Europe. In 2005 SAPI was officially admitted as member of SMES – Europe.

In 2006 SAPI's experts had the chance to participate in workshops in Milan, Italy.

A joint project (Coopération Wallonie-Bruxelles avec la Bulgarie (2006-2008) «*PARCOURS d'INTERVISION et INTERACTION*» PROJET SMES-EUROPA et SAPI, Dans le cadre de l'accord de coopération entre la Commission communautaire française de la Région de Bruxelles - Capitale et la République de Bulgarie, signé a Bruxelles le 7 décembre 2002, SMES-EUROPE, en collaboration avec le partenaire Bulgare SAPI, a l'intention de présenter ce projet de formation / échange, de même qui a été fait dans le cadre de coopération avec la Pologne.) was supported by the Bulgarian government in a very peculiar way – without any financing. That fact brought a lot of problems to our organization, but we did not give up and were able to receive four representatives of our partners, to prepare for them a programme to visit places with good practice examples in Sofia, Blagoevgrad and Pazardjik.

Thanks to its good image SAPI was invited to conduct an independent monitoring on *AMELIORATION DE LA PRISE EN CHARGE DES ENFANTS ET ADOLESCENTS AVEC DES BESOINS SPECIFIQUES DANS LES CENTRES DE JOUR ET LES INSTITUTIONS EN BULGARIE : «L'ENFANT ET SES SYMPTOMES»* project for Médecins du Monde, Bordeaux, France. In Bulgaria the project was led by the “Child and space” organization. The project is for a period of three years and our representatives participate in the seminars, seek feedback from the participants, and meet with end-users of project outcomes other than training participants. The 2006 report was prepared by Neli Petrova and Milvana Panayotova.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

- The development of organization is successful; it is a leader among NGOs working with children and families at risk.
- We have achieved results in all main priority activities – research initiatives, training, service provision.
- The activities of the organization mark sustainability – we work under agreements for two, three, five years, which enables us to develop administrative capacity and be able to accept short-term contracts too.
- In 2006 we started economic activities for the first time. The acquisition of a License for Professional Training will open up chances for serious work in the field of training services. This is very important to SAPI as an independent organization.
- In 2006 the Institute established itself as a leader in the field of methodology of social work with children and families. In this context it is necessary to give a meaning to our role and stand out still better by preparing annual reports, publishing bulletins, etc.
- SAPI has a human resource of reputable specialists, which came as a result of our consistent policy of developing our own team and not following the widespread policy of hiring external consultants. We think that we must pursue this policy and strengthen it in the direction of establishing new teams of trainers in the various SAPI's programmes, teams of researchers, supervisors and consultants.
- It is necessary to continue making efforts for improvement of the organization and management of work in the atmosphere of continuous expansion of activities.

The Board of Directors of SAPI expresses its thankfulness to all members of the association, to all members of the organization's team in all its structural units, to all partners and friends for the successful joint activities in 2006.

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