

## Programme proposal “Refugees for Refugees”



Tanja Pavlov

December 2021

This publication is supported by the Regional Project on Preventing and Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

The analysis, results and recommendations in this publication represent the opinion of the author(s) and are not necessarily representative of the position of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

December 2021

**Introduction: The goal of the programme and the methodology of its development**

The “**Refugees for Refugees**” programme<sup>1</sup> is being developed within the project “Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in the Western Balkans”, which is supported by the German Organization for International Cooperation (GIZ)<sup>2</sup>. Through work with migrants and asylum seekers, Group 484 noticed the potential of migrants themselves and their motivation to help and empower their compatriots and other migrants in asylum centres to more easily overcome the situation they found themselves in. The importance of the programme is manifold: 1) empowering migrants and asylum seekers by enabling them to use their potential to help others (fostering a sense of usefulness and self-confidence), 2) better identifying the needs of migrants and asylum seekers with their help as associates, and 3) providing support to migrants and asylum seekers in a way that is closer to their culture and achieving greater motivation to receive support and participate in activities.

The programme was developed in November and December 2021, with a manager, a project assistant, and an associate in charge of the M&E<sup>3</sup> process through five focus groups with migrants and asylum seekers in the asylum centres Bogovađa and Krnjača (3 with women, 2 with unaccompanied minor migrants) with the support of a facilitator, the presence of interviews conducted by field researchers and research assistants and meetings with them<sup>4</sup>, interviews with representatives of the Commissariat<sup>5</sup> and social workers from Bogovađa<sup>6</sup>, and through a meeting and workshop with the field team implementing the project.

At the time of developing the programme, Bogovadja accommodated: 84 men, 25 unaccompanied minors (mostly Afghans) and 11 women (mostly from Somalia, and one woman each from Ethiopia and Congo)<sup>7</sup>. Women (Burundi, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, and Tunisia) stayed at the asylum centre in Krnjača. Since children,

---

<sup>1</sup> For the sake of easier content following, the masculine gender is used in this text, but the reference to the feminine gender is implicitly assumed, as well as the fact that we respect gender diversity.

<sup>2</sup> Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

<sup>3</sup> Gordana Vukašin, G484 Direct Support Programme Manager, Danica Ćirić, G484 Direct Support Programme Assistant, Olivera Bojović, Associate for Monitoring, Evaluation and Capacity Improvement.

<sup>4</sup> Ivana Seratlić and Gordana Grujić

<sup>5</sup> Milena Ribac and Jovana Erović

<sup>6</sup> Tamara Stojanović and Branka Urošević (caretaker) social worker from the Centre for Social Work, Lajkovac Department.

<sup>7</sup> The information was provided by Milena Ribac, a representative of the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of RS.

unaccompanied minor migrants, and women are the most vulnerable groups, the Group 484 team works with them, and we organised focus groups with them.

### **Migrants' needs and potentials and working conditions**

**Focus groups with women and unaccompanied minor migrants** in asylum centres provided us with an insight into their needs, but also the potential and opportunities for them to help others. Primarily, they pointed to the basic needs - for food, clothing (including underwear and socks) and footwear and hygiene products, as well as for a doctor since they often arrive from their journey bruised and injured and in poor health, especially now in the COVID pandemic. The women pointed out the importance of gynaecological check-ups. When arriving at the asylum centre, it is important for them to be informed about all the actors in the centre and what kind of support they can get from them. They would also like to include children in the education system. During their long stays in asylum centres, women expressed a desire to get a job, learn foreign languages (mostly English and Serbian), to learn useful skills such as sewing, to listen to music, have sports activities/gym/yoga, and to cook. On the other hand, women stated that they have skills that can be useful to all who stays in the asylum centre: sewing, teaching children mathematics (a teacher), language skills and translation (English, French, Arabic, Turkish), hair dyeing, make-up, decoration, clothing design, cooking, henna drawing. The minors also pointed to the importance of meeting basic needs and the need for information about services in the centre and house rules, and the lack of Wi-Fi is the most difficult for them.

**Representatives of the Commissariat and social workers** at the asylum centre in Bogovada emphasised the importance of the following topics for minors: house rules, hygiene, and health (the presence of scabies in minors was discussed and their lack of understanding that it is important to use therapy regularly and until full recovery), the importance of education, learning foreign languages (English), respecting cultural differences, abusing psychoactive substances, familiarising with the legal status - asylum/stay on humanitarian grounds, the danger of exploitation, smuggling, working with emotions. When arriving at the asylum centre, the most important thing is to get informed that they are safe and that they can stay in the centre as long as they need to. They also pointed out the continuous need for clothing and hygiene products. Representatives of the Commissariat noticed that it is important to encourage women and girls (the group that is currently in the centre – staying for a short time, from a few days to a month and a half) to be active, since they rarely leave their rooms. As a good practice example of refugees helping refugees, social workers mentioned a

beauty salon in the asylum centre, which included a hair salon and manicure, where everyone was happy to come. They suggested that the salon be renovated.

**Members of the Group 484 team** identified the following key problems of target groups (unaccompanied minors, women, children and girls): 1) individual psychological problems as a result of losses in the homeland, obstacles during their journey and the life in collective centres (lack of routine and habits, lethargy, self-punishment, aggression, depression, sleep problems, emotion management, stress, uncertainty, guilt, lack of self-confidence, identity issues, “neither a child nor an adult” attitude towards youth), 2) difficulties in family functioning (lack of family rituals, parenting, male-female relations), 3) social relations - with peers within their own community, other ethnic communities, with the local population (conflicts, violence, language barriers), 4) lack of information about services and responsible persons, 5) health problems, 6) economic problems (lack of money, clothing, jobs), 7) educational problems.

In addition to the needs and potential of the target groups, we also analysed the **working conditions**. The first specificity of working with them is the large *fluctuation* and the impossibility of continuous work because it is possible that a participant of one workshop will no longer be present at the next one. Closely related to this is the *number of participants in a workshop* - which can vary from five, six to 30. Then there is the *diversity* of the group we work with - the length of stay in the asylum centre and participation in activities, as well as cultural background or language spoken. This means that a woman who has already gone through several workshops and one who came for the first time can be at the same workshop. It also means that in addition to a Farsi interpreter, a Pashto and/or French interpreter is often needed (for women from Burundi), so usually everything is interpreted into Farsi and a workshop participant who knows Farsi and Pashto interprets into Pashto. When someone speaks French, it is interpreted into French, and English is often used for double/triple interpretation. It should be borne in mind that many workshop participants are illiterate, so it is better to use forms of communication that do not require writing and reading. Thus, the question arose as to how to develop the Refugees for Refugees Programme in such specific conditions, which hinder the usual dynamics of work.

### **Refugees for Refugees Programme**

We tried to respond to these needs and challenges by developing elements of the programme in different phases of arrival and stay of migrants and asylum seekers in

asylum centres, and by engaging migrants/asylum seekers who stay in the asylum centres and Serbia for a longer or shorter period of time.

### **Arrival at the asylum centre**

The goal of the activities: To meet the basic needs in the form of food, clothing, footwear and hygiene products, the need for security and information. It is important that the words of consolation are said to the newcomers, that they have come to safety and that they have decent conditions to settle down and think about what they plan to do next. It is important that they receive information about all the service providers and services they can get at the asylum centre.

Implementers of the activities: Children, unaccompanied minors, women who stay longer in the asylum centre. It would be good to identify informal leaders at the centre, whom others turn to for advice, respect and trust them.

Types of the activities: Target groups should be informed that a series of workshops and activities will be held through which they will help newly arrived migrants and asylum seekers in the asylum centre, by working together on how to welcome, inform and support them in the first days of their stay at the centre.

#### **➤ Information gathering workshops**

The workshop should cover the following topics: 1) how you were welcomed in the asylum centre (who welcomed you, what information you received, what necessities you received), 2) how you would like to be welcomed in the centre (who you would like to welcome you, with what words and information, what you would like to get), 3) summarising all the necessary information about people and services in the centre and daily schedule, as well as necessities required on arrival. In this part, the facilitator summarises what the participants said and includes information important but not mentioned. In preparation for this workshop, the facilitator, in cooperation with representatives of the Commissariat, collects information on all service providers and services in the asylum centre, and the house rules of the centre. This workshop can also be conducted with children by asking them if they remember coming to the centre, who they first saw, what the person told them and by giving them important information.

Method of work: Divide the participants into groups according to the language they

speak (especially if there are a large number of participants), give them flipchart paper on which to draw the camp and the people who welcomed them. It is possible to prepare paper/cardboard camp elements and figures of people in advance, which they then glue on paper and write who they are and what they got from them. The method of working should be adjusted to children - they can first draw the day when they came to the centre and the people who welcomed them. Then they can show their drawings, explain them, and talk about how they felt when they came, and the facilitator can choose a paper figure for each person the children present and stick it on the camp drawing. Finally, the facilitator adds the paper representation of people they have not yet met and explains to the children what they can get from them.

➤ **Workshops and activities for the development of information material**

Workshops and activities include the following steps: 1) presenting important information collected through the previous workshop, 2) designing communication channels or ways in which this information could be presented to different target groups, 3) developing information material about the camp, house rules, and activities offered to them - it can be in the form of videos on a mobile phone, video games, comics, etc.

Method of work: These workshops and activities should be led by facilitators from the art profession - photographer/camera operator/programmer, cartoonist. Group 484 has experience in hiring artists who have produced materials for exhibitions through workshop activities. In this case, information material will be produced.

➤ **Workshops and activities for designing ways to welcome newcomers to the asylum centre**

Workshops and activities contain the following elements: 1) devising ways to welcome newcomers to the camp, 2) devising welcoming products, 3) making products.

Method of work: A so-called **welcoming committee** can be organised, two to three people (minors to welcome minors, women to welcome women/families, children to welcome children) should welcome newcomers. They will be trained and prepared to introduce themselves to newcomers and to introduce them to the asylum centre, the people who work there and the services they provide, as well as the house rules of the centre. In cooperation with the Commissariat, they will be informed when they can visit newcomers. They will also ask newcomers about their needs and inform

social workers and the Commissariat about their needs. They could wear G484 uniforms and identification cards so that they have a sense of importance and become aware of the responsibilities they have.

A **welcoming tea party** can be organised, which can be accompanied by a bazaar where migrants will choose their clothes. Clothes and footwear are presented on hangers and shelves as in the shop, so that migrants have the feeling they are buying in the shop, and not being given help.

**Workshops for making welcome items.** Occupational workshops can be used for this purpose to produce welcome items, such as towels, tablecloths, pillows, soaps. Children can make posters, bracelets, write welcome letters, young people can record music, etc.

**Tour of the collective centre** – it is possible to make a map with the participants of the workshops or a video that would be given to newcomers, as well as a “tourist tour” of the camp and all its activities.

### **Stay in the asylum centre**

The goal of the activities: Empowerment of migrants staying in the asylum centre by giving active roles in the implementation of activities and providing a “role” model.

Implementers of the activities: Children, unaccompanied minors, women. Those staying in the asylum centre, but also in private accommodation.

Types of the activities:

- **Workshop for identifying the needs and potential of migrants.** This workshop should be realised from time to time, every 3 to 6 months, as the structure of migrants in the camp is changing, and thus people from the migrant population who can perform activities. The workshop also serves to evaluate and improve activities. It consists of the following elements: 1) introducing and getting to know migrants, 2) assessing the activities of Group 484 so far, 3) proposing new activities of Group 484 and its role in them.

Method of work: 1) Introductory part: presentation of participants through making badges with names. During the presentation, they say their name and where they are from, and if the group is not large, they can also say the meaning of their name. Participants are then asked to line up in a semicircle from left to



right, from those with the shortest stay in the camp to those with the longest. 2) Participants are given cards with drawn activities of Group 484 /or photos from the activities and they should be classified into three categories: I like them (happy face), not bad (flat face), I do not like them (unhappy face). Depending on the size of the group, each participant can do this task on their own, so they can be divided into groups and agree on the classification of activities together. They could immediately split into groups and work together. The division into groups takes place according to the language they speak, so they could understand each other more easily. 3) In the third part, participants should draw and add new cards with activities that they would like to have, and then the activities that they could lead themselves (if these activities have already been mentioned, they should mark them - they can be given a figurine representing them to glue to the activities they would lead). Participants with certain skills (sewing, language skills, designing, henna drawing, hairdressing, make-up) need to see to what extent and how they can lead certain activities and what kind of support they need.

- **Developing and implementing “tourist offer”** - through workshops various tourist tours are designed, e.g. “In the Footsteps of Islamic Culture in Belgrade”. Elements of the workshop: 1) interesting parts of Belgrade for a certain tour are shown, 2) “tourist offer” is made (places to be visited and stories related to them, which may include stories from the literature and childhood of migrants, souvenirs), 3) visits with migrants along with a story developed in the “tourist offer”, and two migrants are chosen as tourist guides who tell stories for each place (it is possible to organise with the local population). The following scenario is also possible: 1) the “tourist offer” is recorded in an interesting way - it is recorded on the spot, migrants can show and tell a story about certain parts of the city, 2) it is presented to other workshop participants, 3) motivated workshop participants and those who stay longer are trained to lead tours. “Souvenirs” can be made at the occupation workshops.

Method of work: these workshops should be designed with the help of professionals - tour guides, history/art history students, camera operators/photographers.

- **Celebrating holidays** –the workshop deals with the customs for certain holidays, designs the organisation of holiday celebrations (what should be prepared and in what ways) and how to invite the local population.
- **“My day dedicated to others”** - through a workshop on recording needs and potentials, identify people who have skills they can share with others. It is

organised once a week/month when other people learn these skills, such as henna drawing, make-up, yoga, sports activities (one migrant girl in private accommodation trains football), playing music, etc. Joint preparation for the realisation of activity is made with each migrant leader of the activity. These activities can also be led by migrants who are accommodated in private accommodation. Besides migrant leaders, the Group 484 facilitator is always present.

- **Renovating the beauty salon in the asylum centre in Bogovađa**, where migrants would work.
- **Designing a sewing course** with the help of women who said they know how to sew. Currently, one migrant woman in Krnjača is a fashion designer and she can help with the design. Social workers suggested sewing things they needed, such as towels. Things that will be used as souvenirs could be sewn as well, things important for the holidays, etc.
- **Transferring experience from school** - a day could be dedicated to schoolchildren to transfer what they have learned in school and what their general experiences from school are. Preparations are needed with the children - what and how they will present to their peers and presentations are made with the support of the Group 484 facilitator.
- **Transferring experience of living in Serbia** - those who left the collective centres, got a job, went to school, can transfer their experience. Preparations should also be made with them on how to present their experience in cooperation with the Group 484 facilitator.
- **Activities in the room** (if it is possible to provide one) **outside the centre for all migrants (accommodated in the centres and in private accommodation) and the local community: “Evening of African music”, “Evening of Iranian cuisine”**. Music competitions/karaoke, cooking competitions, etc. are also possible.

## **Programme Implementation Plan**

**January-February** – gathering the team and professionals of artistic professions and developing 2 programmes:

- Arrival at the Asylum Centre Support Programme: a cycle of 3 arrival at the asylum centre workshops (information gathering, developing information material, and “welcoming” newcomers) for three target groups - children, minors, and migrant women, and follow-up activities after the workshops to

develop required material.

- Staying at the Asylum Centre Support Programme: designing the development of the “tourist offer”, designing preparations for the celebration of Nowruz (New Year) on the first day of spring, the possibility of finding space, designing one-time contributions of migrants.

**March-April-May** – implementing designed workshops and accompanying activities.

**June** – workshop for identifying the needs and potential of migrants, through which pilot programmes will be evaluated, and the needs and potential of newly arrived migrants determined.

**July-August-September** – adjusting and implementing the programmes based on the evaluation and identification of the needs and potential of migrants.