Project description

ABOUT THE KONTRA:
Lesbian Group Kontra is a non-governmental organization that promotes lesbian human rights. It was founded in summer of 1997, in Zagreb. Kontra operates according to feminist and anti-militaristic principles, and opposes all forms of discrimination. The group was registered in 2002. Kontra considers the right to different sexual orientations to be one of basic human rights. It advocates elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against lesbians, bisexual women and discrimination based on other sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions.
Kontra works with: Iskorak-Center for Sexual and Gender Minorities Rights, Women's Network of Croatia, The Union of Autonomous Trade Unions of Croatia, LGBT - Gayten (Serbia), Center for Women War victims, Autonomous women's House, Domine-feminist organization, ŠKUC-LL (Slovenia), ILGA-Europe (International Lesbian and Gay Association-Europe). Kontra is a member of the Women's Network of Croatia and LGA-Europe (International Lesbian and gay Association-Europe). We actively participate in different projects and initiatives organized by LGBTIQ, women's and peace organizations or individuals in and out of Croatia.

PROJECT GOAL/PURPOSE:
- To raise standard of mental health care of lesbian and bisexual women
- To raise awareness about mental health issues among LB women and mental health experts

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:
- To improve mental health support for lesbian and bisexual women
- To encourage lesbian and bisexual women to seek support and help
- To educate health providers about lesbian health issues
- To provide encouragement for parents of LGB persons
- To create safe space for L women

ASPECTS: Counselling Centre works on the grounds of feminism. Feminist point of view and feminst rules are crucial for creation of our work. Counselling Centre's services are based on peer counselling, activist apporach and expert's support. Counselling must be provided by lesbian and bisexual women because they have experience of beeing sexual minorities but they must be educated by experts and have constant support. Thereby our Counselling Centre is safe space, free of discrimination, and provide place for sharing experience, getting support and information.

ACTIVITIES:
- Phone hotline and e-mail counseling
- Individual counseling
- Supervision for psychologist who conduct individual counseling
- Supervision for volunteers
- Workshops for lesbian and bisexual women (diffferent topics: homophobia, violence, discrimination, coming out...)
- Support group for lesbian and bisexual women
- Support group for parents of LGB persons
- Support group for trans women
- Educational trainings for persons involved in psychosocial work
- Printing promo materials about Counseling Center's activities

<u>Individual therapy sessions</u>
Individual therapy sessions are held by psychologist Iva žegura. She has been working in Kontra since the beginning of the Counseling Center for Lesbian and Bisexual Women. She is also working in Vrapče Hospital. She has experience in working with LGBTIQ issues and wrote a book about coming out. Individual therapy sessions are held app. 8 times a month and each is individually arranged with each client. In order to solve particular problem one's been faced with, there's been a need for several therapy sessions for each client.
<u>Phone hotline and email counseling</u>
Educated volunteers work ver day on phone hotline. E-mail counseling has been working every day. Each call and e-mail has been registered.
<u>Supervision for volunteers</u>
Psychologist holds supervision for volunteers once a month. Cases and possible difficulties are discussed. Also, psychologist supervisor teach volunteers about techniques and methods necessary for counselor's work.
<u>Supervision for psychologist (therapist)</u>

Superior psychotherapist holds supervision for our therapist once a month. Supervisions has been ensuring support and help with difficulties and professional doubts regarding therapist's work. This supervision is held by Irena Bezić.

Support group for lesbian and bisexual women

Support group meetings is moderated by psychologist. Aim is to exchange deeply personal issues and problems related to coming out, sexual orientation, identities, sexuality, partnership, expressing emotions, dealing with conflicts, self-esteem. Women must obligate themselves to participate in every meeting. It is important for group dynamics and establishing confidence among participants.

Support group for parents of lesbian, gays and bisexual parents

Group is initiated by parents of LGB persons.Topics for discussions are: coming out process, aspects of accepting different kinds of sexual orientation and/or gender identities, problems in family, non-acceptance in social environment, prejudice related to sexual orientation and/or gender identity...

ARGUMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT:

Counseling Center's work has confirmed the need for such project. Lesbian and bisexual women have been seeking for psychological help, information and peer support. Most frequent problems of our clients (lesbian and bisexual women) are internalized homophobia; absence of support of family and friends; social isolation (difficulties to meet other LB women); violence and harassment within families and in public spaces; abuse within relationship; alcohol, smoking and drugs.

Counseling Center's services are suitable for women living outside Zagreb. Most women who call phone hotline or sent e-mails live outside Zagreb and are feeling isolated. They need someone for conversation and support. Safe environment for sharing feelings, fears and opinions is essential to them. As our social environment is homophobic, there is need for safe place where lesbians and bisexual women could get support and encouragement. Research *Violence against lesbians, gays and bisexuals in Croatia*[1] showed that every second lesbian, gay or bisexual person in Croatia had suffered violence due to her/his sexual orientation. Participants experienced insults or swearing, threats and physical violence. As the numerous studies before, that study also showed that experience of violence was related to several symptoms of the psychological problems. Persons who experienced assaults and limitation of freedom due to their sexual orientation show more anxiety, depression and lower self-esteem than the person who had not experienced violence.

METHODOLOGY:

- Organizing phone hotline and e-mail counseling every day in period of 12 months
- Organizing individual counseling 8 times a month in period of 12 months
- Organizing supervision for psychologist 12 times in period of 12 months
- Organizing supervision for volunteers 12 times in period of 12 months
- Organizing 6 workshops in period of 12 months
- Organizing 6 support groups for LB women in period of 12 month
- Organizing 6 support groups for parents of LGB women in period of 12 month
- Organizing 2 educational trainings for persons involved in psychosocial work
- Printing 1000 stickers and 400 badges with information about Counseling Center's activities

TARGET GROUP:

Target group are lesbian and bisexual women.Target group for some activities are parents of LGB persons. Target group for some activities are persons involved in psychosocial work (psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, pedagogues and similar professions).

RESULTS:

Counseling Center for Lesbian and Bisexual Women's aim is to empower women in seeking their right for quality health care system. Also, it provides mental health support for lesbian and bisexual women and improves their complete wellbeing. It ensures safe environment where lesbians and bisexual women could express their sexuality, sexual health issues, feelings, doubts and problems.

Access to mental health care is one of the basic human rights. This project ensures quality mental care for lesbians and bisexual women which is missing in Croatian health care system. Possibility to have psychological support improves human rights of lesbian and bisexual women.

Coordinator of the project is Sanda Brumen, her job includes: organizing schedules for volunteers, organizing educational meetings for volunteers, organizing workshops, organizing gatherings for women, organizing supervisions, making contacts with activists and experts who hold workshops/lectures, making networks with Croatian and international experts and activists, managing the fundraising (applying for grants, writing proposals and reports, communicating with funders), organizing distribution of flyers and stickers, advertising the Counseling Center in newspapers, web

[1] Pikić, Jugović: *Violence against LGB population in Croatia*; Kontra: Zagreb, 2006

sites, PR – showing in media (TV, radio, newspapers…) and writing statements for media, writing articles for web sites about lesbian issues, searching for books, handbooks, articles and movies on the internet, distributing copies of those materials to volunteers and other women, making contacts with youth and women's group.

COOPERATION WITH LOCAL ACTORS:
Persons involved in Counselling Centre's work are often invited to hold lectures about LGBT issues and share experience about work in Counselling Centre. They are invited by NGO's, faculties, local and national institutions. Many of them also recommend our services if they get requests by LGBT community. That indicates that Counselling Centre has high visibility in mainstream context. Leaflets are distributed among faculties, schools, libraries, NGOs, caffe bars, night clubs...

Project was funded by COC Netherlands, Mama Cash (Netherlands) and Global Fund for Women (USA). At the moment, project is funded by Global Fund for Women (USA), this grant last till March 2012.

Yearly budget of the project:

ITEM	**UNIT**	**NO OF UNITS**	**PLANNED COST PER UNIT (EUR)**	**PLANNED TOTAL COST (EUR)**
Honoraria for the e-mail and phone hotline counsellors	month	12	50	600
Honoraria for individual therapist	month	12	123	1476
Honoraria for the psychologist's supervisor	month	12	40	480
Honoraria for the volunteers' supervisor	month	12	40	480
Honoraria for workshop educator	person	6	130	780
Travel costs for workshop educators	person	4	58	232
Accommodation costs	person	4	71	284
Refreshment	workshop	6	20	120
Honoraria for conducting support group for LB women	month	6	52	312
Honoraria for conducting support groups for parents of LGB persons	month	6	52	312
Honoraria for educator of trainings for persons involved in psychosocial work	training	2	250	500
Refreshment for training	training	2	20	40
Lunch for participants in the training	person/training	40	5	200
Printing stickers	piece	1000	0,4	400
Telephone costs for the phone hotline	month	12	20	240
Project coordinator honoraria	month	12	400	4800
Office supplies	month	12	30	360
TOTAL				**11616**