

## MHPSS TWG 8.03.2024 Meeting minutes

**Date:** 8 March 2024

**Chaired by:** Olga Khan WHO, Przemysław Marszał UNHCR

**Minutes taken by:** Przemysław Marszał UNHCR

### 1. Introduction and welcoming of new members and partners.

### 2. Feminoteka - Katarzyna Nowakowska

The Feminoteka Foundation is a feminist non-governmental organisation established in 2005 in Warsaw. Feminoteka's priority is counteracting violence against women and girls, with particular emphasis on sexual violence.

#### **Feminoteka's programmes:**

- Helpline for women – survivors of violence
- in Polish (888 88 33 88 – weekdays 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.),
- Ukrainian, Russian and English (888 88 79 88 – weekdays 2 p.m. – 7 p.m.)
- Legal and social advice, psychological counselling, individual and group therapy, psychotraumatological care, intercultural assistance
- Safe Spaces
- Planning for Independence
- Rape crisis centre
- the Samo Dobro social enterprise
- Training, workshops, seminars
- Advocacy
- ECHR litigation
- Since the escalation of the war in Ukraine we have strived to provide the necessary assistance to Ukrainian refugees – women and their children

#### **The first rape crisis centre in Poland:**

- comprehensive, survivor-based care
- possibility to store evidence until the decision on reporting
- assistants
- cooperation with partners across Europe
- over 150 clients during the first six months of operation.

#### **Advocacy aimed at:**

- Introducing a consent-based definition of rape
- Uniform standards of care consistent with WHO guidelines
- A comprehensive, state-funded system of care with at least one specialised sexual assault treatment unit in each voivodeship
- State-funded system of referrals
- Training programmes for all professionals working with survivors

### 3. Crimes committed during Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

**Access to justice and rehabilitation for victims.** Elena Wasylew - Helsinki Foundation For Human Rights, Oliia Kotsiuruba – NGO Opora

#### **The goals of documenting international crimes:**

- Supporting efforts for justice for victims, such as providing information to investigative authorities in Poland and Ukraine as well as to the ICC.
- Giving voice to refugees who wish to testify about the injustices they have experienced.
- Historical memory.
- Raising awareness in Poland about the consequences of crimes and their impact on the lives of victims and entire communities (Physical health, psychological consequences, economic situation).
- Disseminating knowledge and terminology among legal circles and governmental institutions.
- Advocacy in Poland to ensure access to the justice system and the identification and rehabilitation of victims.
- Documenting organizations: Lemkin Center; Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, Opora, Project Sunflowers.

#### **Urgent need for the identification of victims and ensuring access to rehabilitation:**

Justice in the courtroom is crucial, but it is also necessary to provide systemic support to individuals who have experienced the most serious crimes (torture, war rape, enforced disappearances).

People who need humanitarian assistance immediately upon arriving in a safe country also require mechanisms to address the consequences of the crimes committed against them – for example, by:

- Providing specialized medical care (e.g., for torture survivors or war rape victims; individuals requiring specialized treatment such as cancer or dialysis).
- Offering psychological support (Ukrainian psychologists, specialized training in assisting individuals dealing with the consequences of wartime trauma, understanding the context of experienced crimes).
- Providing legal assistance (e.g., obtaining compensation, registering complaints, etc.).
- Many individuals are unable to work – not everyone can be self-reliant.

**Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights:** Advocacy in Poland to ensure that survivors have access to justice and rehabilitation (including the Justice Fund, Social Security Institution). Striving for Poland to adjudicate war crimes before national courts.

- Justice is not just about courtroom verdicts; it also involves access to restorative justice, including rehabilitation, helping people partially regain their lives destroyed by war.
- HFfHR documents testimonies and places them in a shared database with the Ukrainian NGO Coalition documenting war crimes - <https://www.5am.in.ua/en>
- HFfHR conducts outreach in locations where it can reach refugees; interested individuals can fill out a questionnaire and schedule an interview at the office. Contact with psychologists. All interviewers are trained (war trauma conducted by the Center for Torture Survivors; Murad Code - <https://www.muradcode.com>).
- Over 1800 conversations, with "only" over 100 interviews conducted.

**Project Sunflowers** is an international organization created by lawyers to collect information professionally, ethically, and effectively for the purpose of achieving justice for international crimes committed in the context of the war in Ukraine.

The organization has built a database that allows victims to record their testimonies for investigations conducted by international and national investigative bodies. Victims can also input their own content into the digital database – including their memories, testimonies, as well as photos, videos, and audio materials. This method ensures minimal interference with testimonies that may become evidential material and reduces the risk of re-traumatization associated with repeated questioning of the victims.

Project Sunflowers volunteers conduct preliminary interviews with individuals willing to provide testimony for the database. After verification, these individuals receive a link where they can record their testimony using a video link. If needed, individuals are provided with contacts for organizations offering psychological support.

Project Sunflowers also provides specialized training for lawyers, humanitarian workers, journalists, etc.

**NGO OPORA** - Ukrainian Organization in Poland, which collaborates with Ukrainians to gather information on Russian war crimes. It officially delivers data to Polish and Ukrainian prosecutors. It has collected nearly 1800 preliminary interviews with witnesses. Lawyers and psychologists conduct conversations together to prevent re-traumatization. It operates in Warsaw + 36 centers in Poland. Since March 1, an additional program for psychological assistance for valuable witnesses has been implemented.

The most common psychological difficulties reported during interviews include:

- Lowered self-esteem and stress related to job search problems
- Problems in family relationships, fear for loved ones remaining in Ukraine, prolonged mourning for the loss of relatives
- Material and psychological dependence in large families on husbands, seniors, people with disabilities - from caregivers, grounds for domestic violence, and other tensions and conflicts in families.
- Constant anxiety about the future, insomnia, aggression attacks, retrospections, longing
- Post-traumatic stress disorder, depressive states
- Increased number of children with developmental disorders
- Conflicts with other residents of collective accommodation places
- Persistent loneliness and difficult adaptation in a foreign country.

#### **What's next?**

- The need for closer collaboration with organizations providing psycho-social assistance.
- Recommendations for safe and ethical identification of victims.
- Development of a policy for access to rehabilitation – medical services, specialized psychological support.
- Justice Fund.

#### **4. Emotional Support and Solution-Focused Strategy Development for Working with Refugee Children – International Rescue Committee - Anna Rzym**

The "Relaxation Zone" project is implemented by the Teacher Training Center in Poznań, in collaboration with the humanitarian organization International Rescue Committee.

Psychoeducational materials are available on the TWG drive or in physical form upon request to Karolina Ufa, Education Manager, [karolina.ufa@rescue.org](mailto:karolina.ufa@rescue.org).

- Poster: How Do You Feel Today?
- Emotion Cards: What Am I Feeling?
- Cards: What Can I Do to Manage Difficult Emotions?
- Exercise Set for Cards

5. **MHPSS TWG Updates** - updated TOR, Workplan. Service mapping reminder.

6. **Partner Updates** - IOM: Invitation to MHPSS Course.

#### **Useful materials:**

- [Poland MHPSS TWG Drive](#)