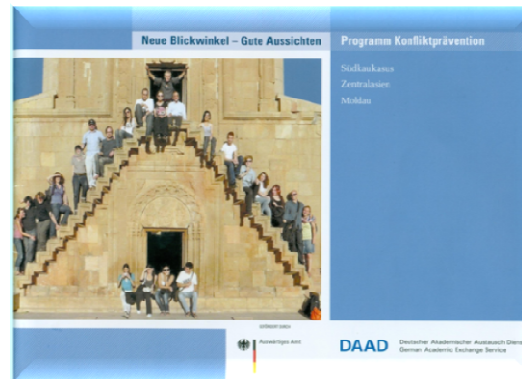
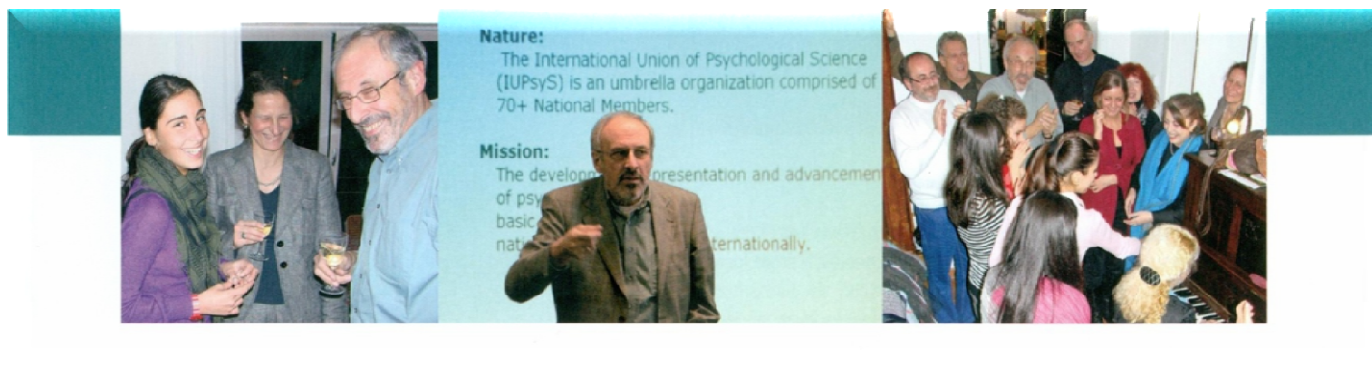


IUPsyS Capacity Building Workshops: An Interview with Professor Rainer K Silbereisen, President of IUPSyS



Following the application to the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) for a grant to support a third Caucasus Workshop, to be held as part of the Union's Capacity Building Program, the President of IUPsyS, Rainer K. Silbereisen, was interviewed on the Caucasus workshop series for the new DAAD brochure on its Conflict Prevention Program. More information on the DAAD, its mission and its work can be found at:

<http://www.daad.de/portrait/wer-wir-sind/kurzportrait/08940.en.html>



An English translation of the original German interview can be found below.

Coping with Bereavement

An Interview with Professor, Rainer K Silbereisen

Shortly after the end of the war between Georgia and Russia in 2008, Georgian psychologists sent an urgent request to their colleagues world-wide – they needed expert knowledge and training in helping the many internally displaced persons. Professor Rainer K. Silbereisen seized the initiative: as President of the International Union of Psychological Science and Professor of Developmental Psychology at the University of Jena, he and his team developed three workshops on 'Bereavement, Research and Practice'. Two of these training workshops, both sponsored by the DAAD, have already taken place.

Who were the workshops aimed at?

We not only addressed psychologists from Georgia, but extended the workshop to others in the Caucasus region: Thus, in 2009 and 2010, approximately 30 participants, including senior and young scientists, as well as practitioners, came from Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan to spend one week in Jena. Here they were able to meet and work with international specialists in the field of bereavement. We particularly wanted to bring young researchers from the Southern Caucasus into discussion with internationally reputed experts.

What kind of training was necessary?

The topic of bereavement was addressed in a variety of ways, ranging from personal grief, such as over the death of an own child, to that affecting whole societies following

"The topic of the workshops ranged from personal grief to grief affecting whole societies following natural catastrophes, terror attacks and war."

natural catastrophes, terror attacks and war. But not all people are equally affected. Who then needs what assistance? Who is really psychologically damaged? In order to give fully informed answers requires psychologists trained in different fields. In the first Workshop in Jena, things became clear very quickly: The participants were highly motivated, but without extensive knowledge regarding scientifically proven programs for handling bereavement. Beyond that, they were lacking experience with scientific feedback concerning their research, especially with regard to quality control. This was something we concentrated on in the workshops.

What specific challenges confronted your colleagues from the Southern Caucasus?

Natural catastrophes and conflicts happen repeatedly in the region. In Georgia, many people had to leave the area where they lived, lost their homes and land, their families torn apart, leaving them with nothing. Beside the normal process of grieving, a minority of people

also show signs of traumatisation, which the psychologists in Georgia were not specifically trained to treat. This meant the region was dependent on the assistance of foreign specialists, who eventually left the country, so that their work had no real long-term effect.

What effect can the Jena workshops have?

The first workshop in 2009 was somewhat of a 'stocktaking' exercise covering all the basic theories and issues related to bereavement. The second workshop, in October 2010, had practical training at the forefront. Participants attended lectures from experts about different forms of bereavement and how they can be managed. They also had practical training in, for example, how to conduct a counselling session. This is a fundamental component: those who have suffered must have the chance to speak about their experiences in a trusting atmosphere.

What is planned for the third Workshop?

This will take place in 2011 and in the Caucasus region. Our goal is an improvement of the academic curricula about bereavement, and to this end we want to work on a White Paper for the Departments

of Education and Science in the three Caucasus countries. In addition, we want to support our academic colleagues in the Caucasus region in developing new programs on bereavement and intervention, and to assist them in creating a formal national association of psychology in each country. In this way, the three workshops belong to the International Union of Psychological Science's Capacity Building program, which sets out to help develop sustainable structures and skills locally.

How effective are such workshops for the individual?

Colleagues from a conflict-rich region learn more about themselves and are able to make new contacts. They can interact with international specialists, experience up-to-date scientific findings, and get an overview of modern graduate training. They have also been able to identify with a research topic that they could pursue further once back home.

The interview was conducted by Uschi Heidel