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Title: Women empowerment in Portugal: Realities, constraints, policies, strategies and initiatives

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Women empowerment in Portugal:

Realities, constraints, policies, strategies and initiatives

Abstract

In Portugal we have yet problems with disadvantaged groups, in some cases because the social conditions, in other cases because the economic conditions and in another situations from the familiar and physical circumstances. This context sometimes is worse in the rural areas, because has other factors associated, as the alcoholism. So, is important to analyze these dynamics, write about those, propose some policies to interview and do something, namely for the women, which are yet in some situations a social group with disadvantages. In this line the objectives of this work is to present here some explanations and reflections about the Portuguese disadvantaged groups, referring some statistics available in some Institutions and analyzing profiles, and finally describe a project, as an example of social intervention, developed in rural counties in the center of Portugal with disadvantaged women, namely unemployed. In the final of this project was interviewed several persons and Institutions to understand their opinion about this initiative and all had a favorable judgment, what reflect the need and the importance of these social interventions. From here were proposed new social policies to be implemented in the Portuguese context that can help the public Institutions in the definition of the public strategies.

Keyword: Disadvantaged groups, rural areas, women empowerment.

Acknowledgments: ACCIG (Association of the Culture and Knowledge for the Gender Equality) and NSRF (National Support Reference Framework).

1. Introduction

Today Portugal experiment great improvements in some social indicators. However the disparities between social groups and regions are yet significant. Namely the unemployed are yet powerfully affected by the exclusion and poverty. Nevertheless this context improve lightly in the nineties, because a strong political social agenda, namely with financial supports from the European Union programs (Santana, 2002).

In some European countries, like Portugal, improvements in some social indicators bring others social problems. It is liquid that in Portugal in the last years the women had important empowerments, with more social participations, what is good to their emancipation and to the society. But this empowerment is associated to others social and health problems, namely to the women, related with the smoking, for example (Schaap et al., 2009).

Is well known the important role of the women in the society, but sometimes this contribution is limited by law, or by others factors, namely social, economic and professional constrains. Is important find ways to break these limitations, because the input given by the women, namely in the rural areas could be crucial (Narciso and Henriques, 2008). In the nineties the growth of the Portuguese female population was larger than the male populations. The women present, also, the higher rates of aging and divorce. The female population shows, yet, the highest values in the single-parent families, enter in the parenting earlier and dedicate more time to the domestic activities. The women experimented an improvement in the level of schooling, in the level of the rate activity, and consequently in the level of unemployment (INE, 2001). Because the traditional social roles of the women, they tend to have jobs with less responsibility and more flexible. This influence, in some circumstances, the security of the women jobs and their access to some professional activities, namely those with more dedication (Ferreira et al., 2012).

However, in Portugal it is also assists to significant phenomenon of domestic violence against the more disadvantaged social groups, namely the women. In the first semester of 2011 were registered 14508 participations of domestic violence by the National Securities Forces, with an average of 2418 participations by month and 80 per day. Relatively to the same period of 2010 it is appears that the number of participations is less 700 occurrences. Sometimes these statistics do not reflect the reality, because come from a willingness of the persons in report situations that were victims. The reported situations are largest in the more populated zones, like Lisboa and Porto. From 2010 to 2011, were verified increases in the reported cases, by the several National Securities Forces, in Bragança, Évora, Guarda, Lisboa, Braga, Castelo Branco, Coimbra, Porto, Vila Real, Viseu and Açores. It can be said that this problem is transversal to the Portuguese society (NEAPSI, 2011).

The domestic violence is yet a reality in the Portuguese society. There is a frontier very small between what is or not considered a domestic violence. Maybe this is an important question to take into account when it is analyzed statistics about these subjects. In some cases is socially accepted that the fathers punish the children and the husbands castigate the wives. However in the last decades the social policies and the social interventions transformed the social representations about these issues (Almeida, 2008).

The violence in a domestic context is a phenomenon relatively recent, only in the eighties was recognized as a social problem. During decades and centuries some practices of punishment were considered as necessary as forms of education inside of the families. Slowly the public interventions entered inside the families and started to take some initiatives to change these social representations. In recent years appeared some public plans to prevent the domestic violence and some programs with financial supports to do actions in disadvantaged social groups (Almeida, 2008).

The social problem of the domestic violence affect men, women, young people, older people, not knowing geographic and economic limits, with consequences at individual, familiar, professional and social level. To reduce these cases will be important which the social policies contemplate the prevention of the domestic violence at a primary level, introducing in the scholar books issues with strategies about the non-violence. Will be important, too, create equips of intervention in these contexts and structures to receive the victims. Finally is important a concern about the social reintegration of the victims and aggressors (Almeida, 2008).

The IV World Conference about the Women, promoted by the United Nations, and the acceptance of the Beijing Platform for Action, all in 1995, were a turn in the view about the world problems of the female population and the gender equality (Silva, 2010).

Despite the several initiatives about the empowerment of the women, namely with the national, European and international social policies the inequality between men and women still exist, because the gender stereotypes. It is important to deepen, at national and European level, the legislation to promote the equality between men and women, with benefits to the society and the human dignity (Rêgo, 2010).

In some countries, as some African countries, the women work predominantly in the agriculture. For example in Mozambique, for the years 2002-2003, more or less 90% of the women economically active worked in the agricultural sector and in some cases without a wage (Klaveren et al., 2009a). In Angola, also, many women work in the agriculture and for long hours (Klaveren et al., 2009b).

2. Data analysis

In this part, of the work, will be presented some statistical data about the women empowerment and about the domestic violence in Portugal. The data presented following were obtained from the Statistics Portugal and Portuguese Public Institutions.

Considering the data obtained from the Statistics Portugal they are presented following the figures 1 and 2. The figure 1 presents the women activity rate, in percentage, for Portugal, Portugal Continental and for some rural counties that will be considered in other sections for another considerations.

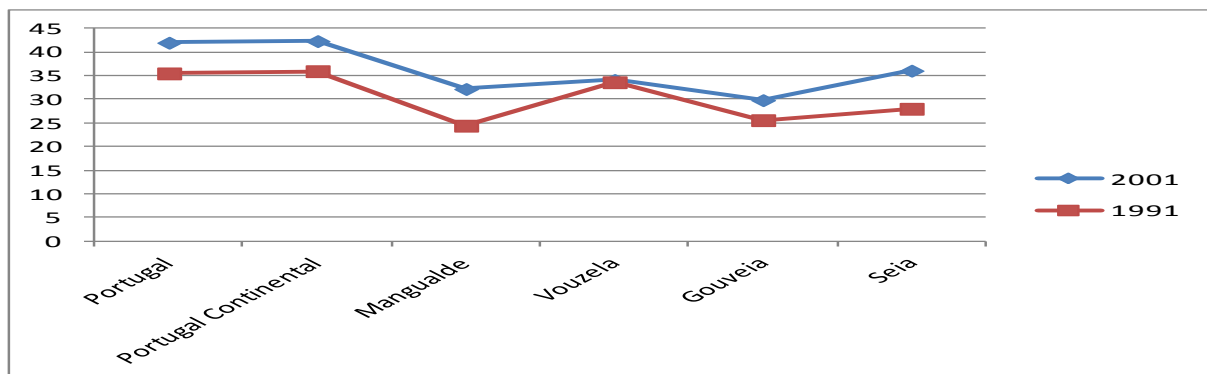


Figure 1. Women activity rate (%) in Portugal

From 1991 to 2001 the women activity rate increase, and this rate is smaller in the rural areas, considering the rate of Portugal and the rates of the rural counties analyzed. In some cases, this is because the women, in the rural areas, work in the agriculture without wage and without be considered a formal work. This work in some management documents is measured more as familiar occupation and in this context in not calculated in the statistics as women activity.

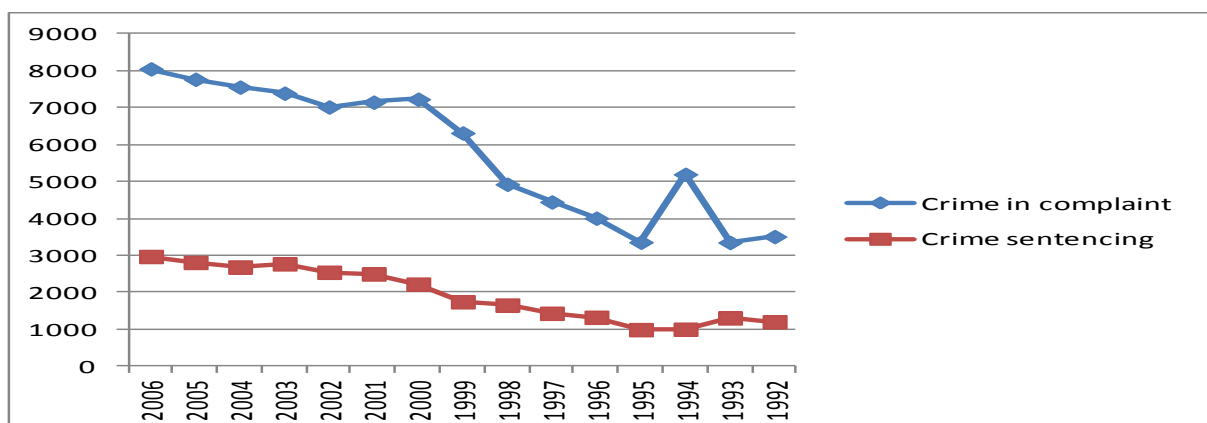


Figure 2. Women victims in processes with men accused/sentenced

From the figure 2 it can be seen that the number of men accused/sentenced, because crimes with women, increase significantly from 1992 to 2006. As it was said before, these data must be observed carefully, because this can be a result of more courage of the women to relate these situations.

Considering the data collected from the Portuguese Public Institutions, namely from Ministry of Internal Administration the figures 3 and 4 showed below are related with the number of cases of domestic violence. The figure 3 represents in a Portugal Continental map the number of domestic violence cases per district for the 2011 year.

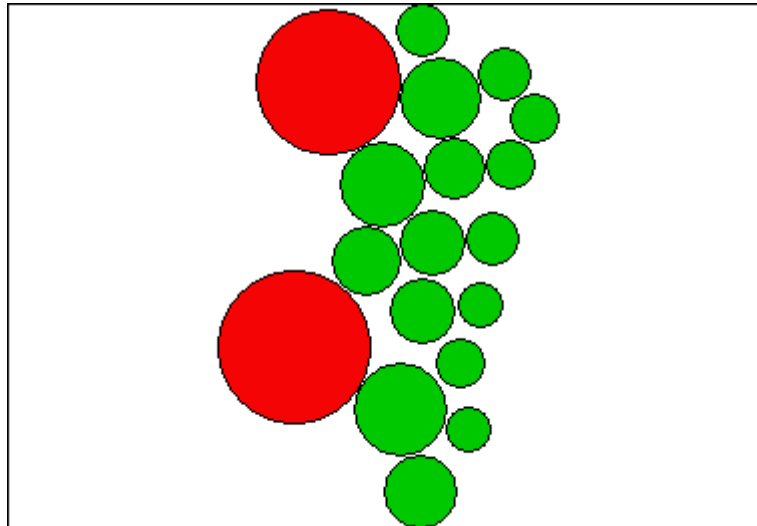


Figure 3. Number of cases of domestic violence in each Portuguese district (2011)

The figure 3 displays more cases of domestic violence in the littoral, namely in Lisboa and in Porto districts (biggest balls), what is natural, because is where there are more population.

The number of cases, in 2011, corrected by the number of persons living in each district, in 2010, is presented in the following figure 4.

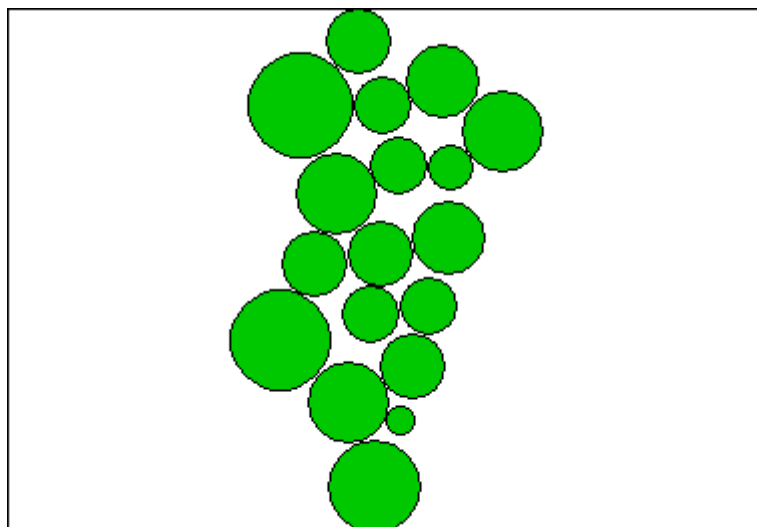


Figure 4. Number of cases of domestic violence relatively to resident population

The number of situations of domestic violence corrected by the number of resident persons, presented in the figure 4, is lower in the districts located in the middle vertical band. However,

Lisboa, Porto and Faro (most southerly) are the districts with more relative occurrences of violence inside of the family.

3. Profiles

Following will be built some profiles related with the violence inside the Portuguese family, considering the information available for the first semester in the NEAPSI (2011) report. All profiles were built with the item with biggest percentage in each subject.

The profile present below is related to the occurrence and participations. The information was available by the National Security Forces.

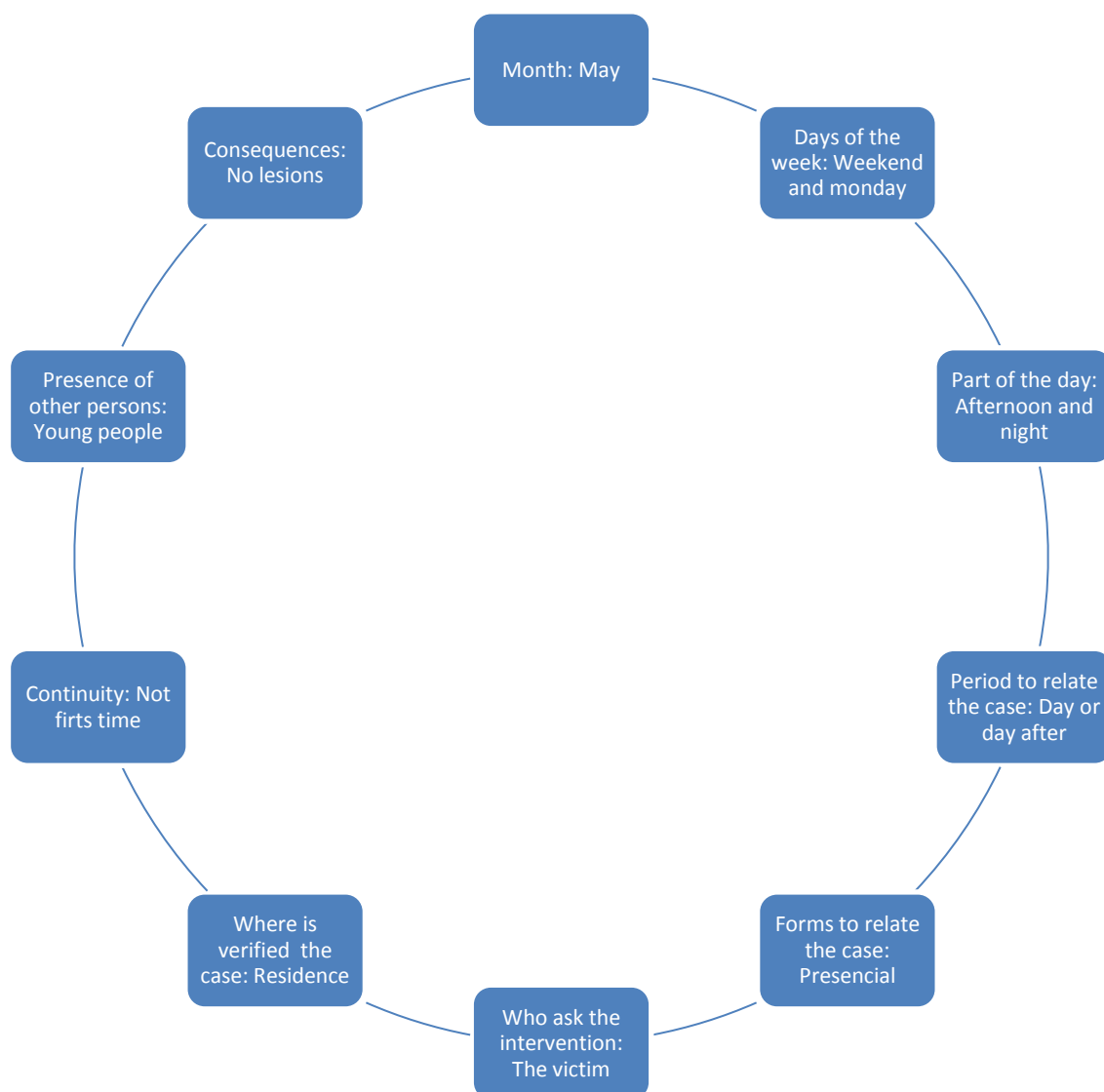


Figure 5. Profile related with occurrences and participations

The items of this profile show that the domestic violence occurs inside the house, in the final of the day, in the beginning of the week and in the presence of the children. Generally the violence has no physical consequences and there is some continuity in the aggressions.

In the figure 6 will be presented a profile taking into account issues linked with victims and complaints.

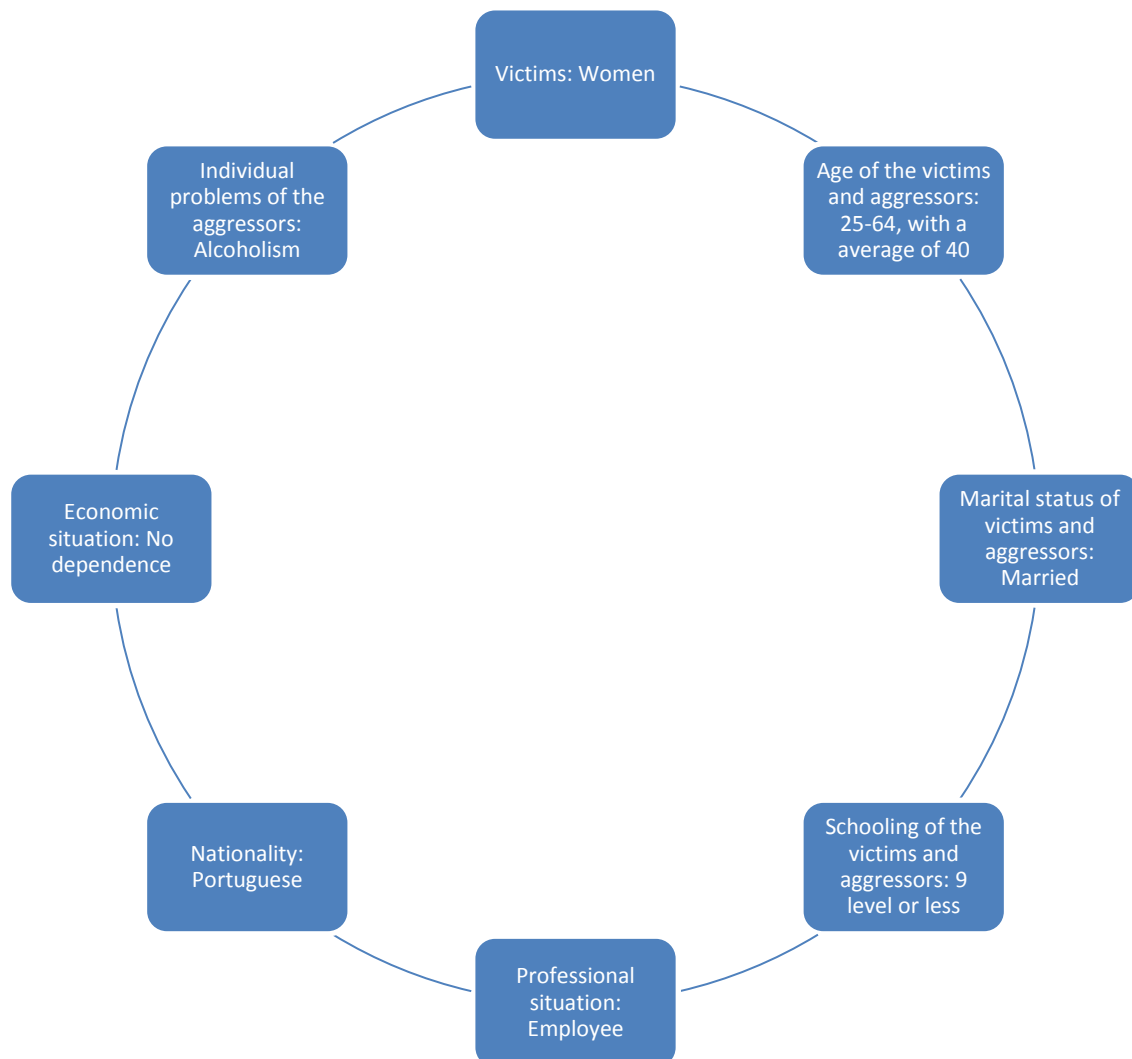


Figure 6. Profile related with victims and aggressors

The victims are women with more or less 40 years, married, with 9 years of schooling or less, employed, Portuguese and not dependent. The aggressors generally have alcoholism problems.

The profile presented below is related with the victim statute and final decisions in processes crime.

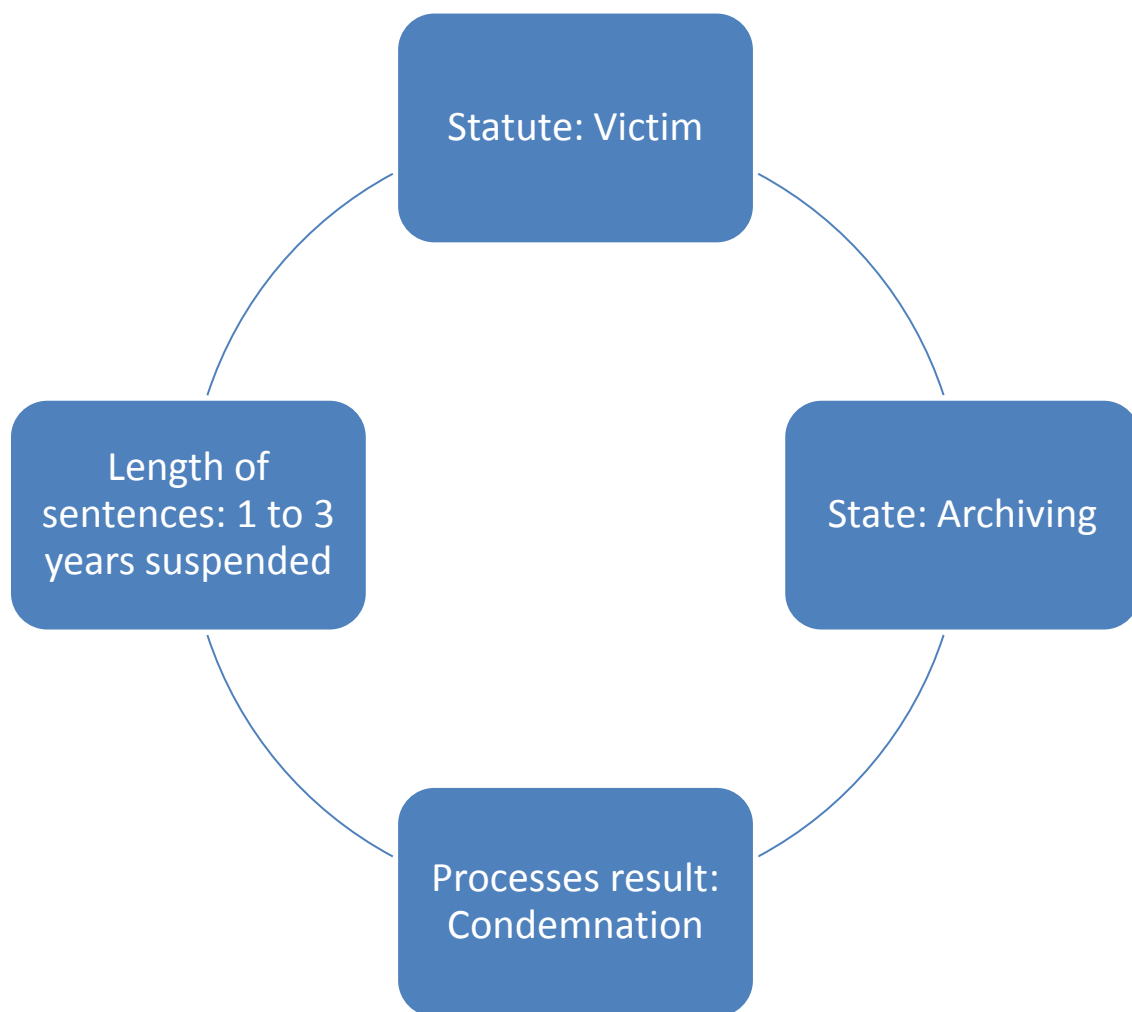


Figure 7. Profile related with victim statute and decision about the crime

The majority of the cases are archived and the cases which have a court decision, these are for about 1 to 3 years with suspended sentence.

4. A project implemented in rural areas

In this section of the work it will be described a project developed in a rural area of the Interior Center of Portugal, namely in the counties of Vouzela, Magualde, Seia and Guarda. The first two counties are from the district of Viseu and the second two are from the district of Guarda. The intention of present this project is for show an example of social initiative developed in disadvantaged zones with disadvantaged social groups, namely women and unemployed.

The project has the name in English more or less like *Women in the Society: Empower to Participate*. This project was implemented by the ACCIG, a Portuguese Association for the equality of gender, and was financed by the National Strategic Reference Framework, a framework with a set of programs from 2007 to 2013.

Analyzing some parts of the application process it can be verified that this project pretended to promote the improve of the civic participation of the women, namely because in the rural areas the women tend to participate few in the political organizations and in social institutions, what show few political and social participation of this social group. In this way was important to capacitate the women to have a full civic participation.

The choice of these rural counties to implement the project results from a set of privileged network of contacts between the ACCIG and local organizations, namely municipalities and social institutions.

In the sessions of the project were used methodologies related with the education using the art, the theater, painting and other forms of artistic expression. There were developed also sessions to the older people with young people from the secondary schools. This became this project as a very innovative at social intervention. There were yet sessions with women empowered to try motivating disadvantaged social groups.

The addressed of this initiative were the workers, technical persons, leaders, professors, students, older people, unemployed women and other disadvantaged social groups. Contacting some of these persons, all of them referred that the project was very interesting and very important for their social life.

The project was developed from the beginning of 2010 and had, in the beginning, a final provided for May of 2012. Now it is expected that the project will go into the final of 2012. This project was structured in 6 actions of divulgation and 6 actions of sensitization.

It is expected which this project has a total of more or less 5000 participants in all actions promoted by the this initiative which contemplates yet closing sessions.

5. Conclusions

The empowerment of the women in Portugal will bring important contributions to the Portuguese society development, but is a process, as observed before, long and with many constraints and difficulties, namely those related with the domestic violence.

The violence in a domestic context is a recent problem, not because appear recently, but for the reason that in the last years the society change the social representations. In other words in some decades ago some familiar violence was accepted and recently was rejected.

The number of cases of domestic violence has increase, not because the increase of the phenomena, but for the reason that the victims fell more courage to denounce the situations. The districts of Lisboa and Porto are where the number of cases, relatively to the number of residents, is bigger, maybe because the some reason referred before, in other words, is where the victims have more force to denounce the cases.

The situations of domestic violence are verified in house, in the final of the day, in the beginning of the week, the victims are women, in the presence of the children and without physical lesions. The domestic violence is endogenous problem of the families and this is confirmed when it is used spatial econometric techniques and it is not found spatial autocorrelation. So, this is not a regional or spatial problem, but a familiar problem and this must be taken into account when the public institutions define social policies. The policies must be directed for the persons and for the families and not for a zone, region or another spatial unity.

The victims and the aggressors are people with more or less 40 years old, married, Portuguese, employed and without dependence. If it is considered that is this social group which will be more problems with the actual Portuguese economic crisis, maybe it will be important stay prepared to yet more social problems.

The majority of the cases with processes crime are archived and those have court decisions are with punishments of 1 to 3 years of suspended sentences.

Despite the number of social policies, the number of programs and amount of financial support to solve some social problems, as the domestic violence, the situations remain and in some cases increase.

It is important to support initiative as that presented before and implemented under that project described in the section 4. All the social groups benefit from these initiatives. Because the empowered people can learn more with new situations, the disadvantaged social groups learn with the leader persons, the young people gain knowledge listening the older people and vice-versa.

All the persons and Institutions participants in this project referred which would be important promote more initiative like that in the future. In fact, in some of these counties, after the project some Institutions replicated some of the actions developed under this initiative. In one county the Town Hall created, after the project, an equip for the domestic violence.

These initiatives are important, because are innovative, awakes conscientious and help disadvantaged social groups.

In the beginning of 2012 in Portugal three women per month die, because the domestic violence. These numbers must attract our attention to the catastrophic situation. As say the Portuguese people, house where there are not bread, everybody scream and nobody has reason.

We cannot accept which in the twenty first century in Portugal three persons die, because incapacity of the society to prevent the situation. How can this be possible in our days? The more problematic is that this situation will can be worse in the future, because the economical problems, with consequences at different social levels. Namely, because that referred before in this work and because the lack of money to empower and help disadvantaged social groups of the Portuguese society, more and more weakened.

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