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**Title:** Effects on women empowerment of awareness raising

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## **Effects on women empowerment of awareness raising**

### **Abstract**

This work is based on a project developed by the ACCIG (Association of the Culture and Knowledge for the Gender Equality) for some rural municipalities in the Center of Portugal. This project was financed by national funds and by funds from the European Union through the NSRF (National Support Reference Framework). The ACCIG aims to empower people, namely the more disadvantaged, particularly the women who are in more vulnerable situation. From the project, for this work, was used the information about the awareness raising. Namely, the information about what was did in these actions of sensitization, about the characterization of the participants in these initiatives and about the receptivity of the women for these projects. The principal objective of this project is to empower the more disadvantaged social groups, particularly women, enabling these persons to a more civic participation.

**Keyword:** Women empowerment, rural municipalities, awareness raising.

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

## **1. Introduction**

The participation of the men and the women in the society is different, because a range of several factors, well explained in the literature. For example, Roy (2011) present social, cultural and questions related with the legislation as factors determinants to the gender differences in the society.

The social gender differences is a problematic, not always easy to solve, despite the various programs developed to empowering the more vulnerable social groups like the women. Sometimes the gender differences appear on trivial issues like the financial literacy. Considering a range of works from the literature, the tendency show which the women perform worse than men in tests of financial knowledge and have less confidence in their financial skills (Hung et al., 2012). The education could play an important role in reducing the gender gap still existent in some countries (De La Croix and Donckt, 2008). The gender divergence can be found, also, in terms of patience in the daily choice. The women with three children below 18 years old take more patient choice (Bauer and Chytilová, 2009).

The importance of programs for the empowerment of the more vulnerable social groups, like the women, is unquestionable, as is demonstrated by Kandpal et al. (2012) in India. Empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process which aids people to obtain control on their personal lives (Warth and Koparanova, 2012).

The tendency in the women empowerment over the past 20 years shows that there were gains in the education, social representation, work remuneration and health conditions. But, the violence against women and some contagious disease continuous to be a problem in some regions and countries, and this economic crisis worsens the situation (Desai, 2010).

The economic factors and the employment are determinant factors in the women empowerment (Swain and Wallentin, 2008 and Francavilla and Giannelli, 2011). These factors give personal independence and this is crucial to the personal empowerment and dignity.

The sport is a way to empower the women, but in many zones of the world, as the South Asia, there are many barriers, yet, against the women participation in the various sports (Nanayakkara, 2012).

Many activities, like the tourism, have a positive relation with the empowerment of the women, but are needed more policies to promote and explore this potential (Ferguson, 2011).

The questions related with the empowering of the more social vulnerable groups are complex, but must be analyzed and debated, because are actual problems and the economic and social crisis of

our days, will bring many questions again to the order of the day. The people in general and the institutions, in particular, must be alert to these phenomena.

## **2. Description of the awareness raising developed in the project and characterization of the participants**

In the project, with the name “Women in the Society: Empower to Participate” developed by the ACCIG for the rural municipalities of the center of Portugal were developed six actions of sensitization, with several sessions in each one, which will be presented following.

### **2.1. Action I**

This action had two sessions. The first was as topic “Women who make” and the following objectives: sensitize the community about the importance of the women empowerment; promote the civic participation; advice and orient for the creation of new opportunities and employments. This session was programmed in various parts and in two phases. Had, yet, a preliminary phase with the objective of sensitizes the potential addressed. In this beginning the ACCIG had the help of the local institutions, namely the municipalities, to create groups of work for the future sessions in form of workshop, with a mensal periodicity. In the beginning of 2011 was initiated the first phase of the first session and all the process had a duration 18 hours, divided in three parts. Each part had three modules of two hours with groups of 20 women for better training. This first part was the topic “Personal and interpersonal development: balance and competences” and had a duration of six hours. The first module was a workshop about “We move forward”, the second module was a personalized activity with the participants, to make a balance of the skills, and the third module was also a personalized activity about the personal portfolio. The second part was a group work for the development of skills in a total of six hours, also. The first module was a collective workshop with the objective of therapy by the art, the second module was, too, a collective workshop the neurolinguistics and the third a collective workshop to training values. These modules were of difficult implementation, because the weak schooling and lack of motivation. The third part was about the value network and how beginning a business. The first module was a workshop, with collective activities about the theme “How to create a value network”, the second module was a workshop about “Business guide” and the third about “Support for a autonomy and/or business creation”. The second phase of the first session took place, also, during the beginning of 2011. This phase had, too, three parts, of six hours, with three modules of two hours each.

The session two about “Work/empower” was a session that took place in July of 2011, in a total of 12 hours. The objectives of this session were: work in the employees of the local institutions and

women of those locals, the skills and the long life learning, to promote the competitiveness of the region.

## **2.2. Action 2**

This action was only a session about “Women self defense” and was in a form of workshop e had the following objectives: give to the people, who work with the problematic of the domestic violence, some skills, instruments and information; disseminate information for a integrated intervention; create and potentiate a support network; create an impact systemic in the media; and adopt a new position against the aggressors and reinforce the self-esteem. This session was four parts, each one developed in different municipalities, and was developed in the beginning of 2011.

## **2.3. Action 3**

In this action were developed four sessions and took place in 2011. The first session about “Women for the XXI century” had as objective to promote interaction between women empowered and women with needs of empowerment.

The second session about “Empowerment and self conscience” was a workshop. The objective was the self empowerment and the personal development. The participants were techniques of the social network, scholar community and from other institutions which work with the public.

The third session about “Empower to participate” had the objective to inform the women about the instruments to deal with de unemployment and how to valorize the skills acquired lifelong.

The last session was the theme “Empower to participate” too, but in another municipality, was a workshop and was the objective of self empowerment and personal development. The participants were techniques from the social network and from others institutions which work with the public.

## **2.4. Action 4**

Here were developed two sessions in the second semester of 2011. The first session about “Active citizenship and image” was a workshop and had two parts. This session took place in a social institution with the following objectives: incentive the participants to obtain an active social participation; valorize the role of the older people in the society; promote the self-esteem of the participants. The participants were older people, employees and techniques of the social institution.

The session two with the topic “For know me and you better” took place, also, in a social institution. The objectives were to promote the self-esteem; develop the feeling of personal competence; develop the respect by the own body; and promote the knowledge about the behaviors related with the masculinity and femininity. The participants were users and techniques of the social institution.

## **2.5. Action 5**

This action was only one session about “Art therapy, adults and autonomy” and took place in the second semester of 2011 in a social institution, as workshop. The objectives were: give to the young people the opportunity to share the learned during the scholar year, considering art techniques; allow to the older people work fears, traumas and blockages, valorizing the skills acquired lifelong. In this session participated students, teachers and older people.

## **2.6. Action 6**

The action 6 had three sessions and took place in the second semester of 2011. The first session about “Intergenerational gender perspectives” was three parts. The first part had the following objectives: promote the self-esteem; and develop the sense of personal competence, as a feeling to better deal with the daily challenges. The participants were techniques and users of local social institutions, students and teachers of the secondary school, and other persons. The second part took place in a secondary school and was the same objectives presented before to the first part. The participants were students and teachers. The third part took place in a social institution with the following objectives: promote dynamics of intergenerational approach; promote the debate about the women profile evolution; create conditions to appear and to consolidate new attitudes which contribute to reducing the intergenerational and gender bias. The participants were students, teachers and users of the social institutions (older people).

The second session about “The art, empowerment and third age”, was a workshop and took place in a social institution. The objectives were: work with the older people the fears, traumas and blockages, valorization the skills acquired lifelong. The participants were young women, social techniques and users of the social institution.

The “Gender, affects and third age” was the topic of the last session which was a workshop and took place in a social institution. The objectives were work with the older people the affects and the feelings; and to promote the communication and the interpersonal relations in the third age. The methodology used was games and other techniques which help the older people to socialize more. The participants were social techniques and users and employees of the social institution (older people).

## **3. Receptivity of the participants for these initiatives**

In this part of the work it will be commented the opinions of the different participants in the several initiatives, taking into account the statistics presented in the table 1 (annex), obtained by surveys.

In general, all participants had great expectations about the initiatives developed in this project and had good opinions about the several actions and sessions. Often low expectations regarding the project became in good reviews about what was realized. The participants were mostly persons from vulnerable groups, as in some case are the women and the older people.

All session 1 of the action I was developed in one municipality with groups more or less similar, so, the different answers are only because the different composition of the groups, namely, women unemployed, young and with low schooling. The session 2 was developed, in the same municipality of the session 1, but, as referred before, for women workers of social institutions. Because this and maybe because was a specific group the answers were more favorable.

The action 2 had four initiatives in four different municipalities and was an event with good receptivity by the participants, because were sessions for self defense with international experts. This good acceptance could be proved when in conversation, with local institutions and the participants, about this action.

The sessions of the action 3 took place in different municipalities and had namely women as participants, so, the different answers had the local effect and the group composition cause.

The action 4 was developed with older people in different social institutions of the same municipality. Maybe this explains the low expectations in the beginning and the better global appreciation.

The action 5 took place in a social institution and was an interaction between younger and older people. Maybe this explains, too, the answers presented in the table 1, with low expectations and good global appreciation.

In the session 1 of the action 6, the participants were students of a secondary school and older people from a social institution, with low expectations about these initiatives and with low global appreciations. The session two was as participants young people unemployed and older people from a social institution. In this case the answers were more favorable, as the answers for the last session developed for older people of other social institution.

From what was said before it can be said that the older people and the students, frequently had low expectations about these initiatives, but improve the opinion after the sessions, maybe this is an important question to understand in future works about these issues.



#### **4. Conclusions**

The women empowering is an important contribution to the social and economic development, because as say the literature the women play a crucial role in the society. In this process of empowering different persons, from different locals and with different age have different perceptions and expectations. Anyway, in addition, these kinds of initiatives are fundamental, because shows to the people as the reality can be different.

It was interesting talk with participants and responsible of the institutions where the initiatives took place, because they gave good feedbacks of these sessions, namely those of self defense and those with interaction between students and older people of the social institutions. Some institutions in some municipalities liked so much of the sessions for self defense which already promoted more initiatives. The same about the interaction among students and older people, so that outside of the project developed more sessions in the social institutions with the students and teachers of the local secondary school.

It is needed more works about these subjects to understand more the social dynamics related with the empowerment of the more vulnerable social groups. It is needed more projects like that presented here to help the women and the older people to have a more participative action in the society, where can play a crucial contributive role.

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ANNEX

Table 1: Opinions about the several initiatives (%)

Actions	Sessions	Phases	Parts	Opinions analyzed					
				Expectations about the workshop			Global appreciation		
				Satisfying very	Satisfying	Satisfying little	Satisfying very	Satisfying	Satisfying little
Action 1	Session 1	Phase 1	Part 1 (17 surveys)	71	29	0	0	100	0
			Part 2 (20 surveys)	65	35	0	15	85	0
			Part 3 (20 surveys)	80	20	0	80	20	0
		Phase 2	Part 1 (24 surveys)	88	8	4	96	4	0
			Part 2 (24 surveys)	92	8	0	92	8	0
	Part 3 (8 surveys)	75	25	0	75	25	0		
Session 2	(6 surveys)		100	0	0	100	0	0	
Action 2	Session 1		Part 1 (18 surveys)	61	39	0	83	6	11
			Part 2 (27 surveys)	77	18	5	86	14	0
			Part 3 (31 surveys)	97	3	0	97	3	0
				--	--	--	--	--	--
Action 3	Session 1			--	--	--	--	--	--
	Session 2	(9 surveys)		100	0	0	100	0	0
	Session 3	(19 surveys)		95	5	0	79	21	0
	Session 4	(13 surveys)		100	0	0	100	0	0
Action 4	Session 1		Part 1 (16 surveys)	69	25	6	81	19	0
			Part 2 (11 surveys)	9	64	27	36	64	0
	Session 2	(22 surveys)		100	0	0	100	0	0
Action 5	Session 1	(9 surveys)		64	36	0	93	7	0
Action 6	Session 1		Part 1	--	--	--	--	--	--
			Part 2 (16 surveys)	56	31	13	56	38	6
			Part 3 (13 surveys)	77	23	0	69	31	0
	Session 2	(21 surveys)		95	5	0	100	0	0
	Session 3	(15 surveys)		60	33	7	80	20	0