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PROMOTING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF MIGRANT WOMEN IN EUROPE

Report Multiplier Event: Training on Migrant Women's Rights in Spain

Organization: Alianza por la Solidaridad

This is a report of one of the multiplier events that is part of the project, "Expanding Tools in Addressing Barriers for Migrant Women to Participate in Democratic Life", in short, WE-EMPOWER. It is funded by the EU funded Erasmus+ programme and coordinated by the European network WIDE+. Next to WIDE+ it is a collaboration of the feminist organisations GADIP (Sweden), NGO Atina (Serbia), KULU Women and Development (Denmark), Romanian Women's Lobby (Romania), Alianza por la Solidaridad (Spain) and Red De Mujeres Latinoamericanas Y Del Caribe (Spain, Red Latinas in short).

The main objective of the project is to support and strengthen the participation of migrant women in Europe, through training activities and the design of tools to enable them to have their voices heard in political spaces.

WE-EMPOWER is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the writers and participants and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union of European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Empowerment of Migrant Women in Spain through Civic Education

In the framework of the European project WE EMPOWER, a series of face-to-face trainings were carried out with migrant women in rural areas of Spain. The objective was to strengthen the capacities of these women to actively participate in civil and democratic life, empowering them to act as multipliers in their communities.

This was one of the first multiplier events organized of WE-EMPOWER. Building on the longstanding expertise of Alianza por la Solidaridad, through the international exchanges earlier in 2022 in this project, the women received essential training that strongly encouraged their awareness as political subjects.

This initiative focused on equipping migrant women with essential knowledge and skills, from understanding the legal and political landscape that defines their participation in Spanish civic life to strategies for effective civic and political advocacy.

The overall goal was to foster a sense of empowerment and recognition of migrant women as political entities with unique perspectives that contribute to more egalitarian societies. The training targeted in particular migrant women working in rural areas.

This paper presents a comprehensive view of both the expected longer term and achieved results, highlighting the impact at various levels. It also outlines the details of the training program and the subsequent actions undertaken by the participants and the organizing associations. It underscores the importance of education, awareness and collaborative efforts to combat discrimination, empower migrant women and ultimately build a more inclusive and equitable society.

Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes were to:

- Increase the capacity of migrant women to interact with civil society organizations, citizens and local and regional authorities to present demands that improve their access to rights and their recognition as political subjects.
- Sensitize other actors to the fact that migrant women are political subjects with specific knowledge and practices that contribute to more egalitarian societies.
- Effortfully and strategically comprehensive initiatives and advocacy measures to actively combat and eradicate the pervasive issues of racism and discrimination entrenched within the intricate fabric of both political and institutional structures, thereby fostering an environment that champions inclusivity, diversity, and equal representation for all individuals, no matter their cultural or ethnic background.

Increasing the capacity of migrant women in rural areas of Spain to participate in democratic and civic life was aimed to specific outcomes:

- Provide migrant women with an understanding of the political and legal context that defines their possibilities for participation in democratic and civic life in Spain.
- To provide migrant women with opportunities and strategies for civic and political advocacy.

- Systematically cultivate and enhance the proficiency of communication strategies and skills, empowering participating individuals to adeptly navigate and engage in diverse interpersonal interactions, articulate their thoughts with clarity and impact, and contribute effectively to various communicative contexts, fostering a dynamic environment conducive to meaningful dialogue and collaboration.

Training concepts

Women in migration were trained in:

1. The political and legal context that defines their possibilities to participate in democratic and civic life in Spain;
2. Opportunities and strategies for civic and political advocacy;
3. Communication strategies and skills.

Activity Report

The initial plan was to conduct one meeting for each specific area. However, the methodology underwent a change. In Andalusia, two separate meetings were organized for the Zafarraya area (Granada), in addition to the trainings held in Halva and Igualeja. Subsequently, in Extremadura, the event was held at the Civic Center in Almendralejo, Badajoz.

As a result of collaboration with women's organizations, diverse needs were identified. Consequently, the project intervention was adapted to address these distinct requirements, leading to the organization of separate events.

Training Events in Andalucia

Training in Zafarraya (Granada)

1. Participants and Content of the Training

- In the session held on July 21, 2023, 83 Moroccan women attended and took part to the activities. The activities took place in “Centro de día de Zafarraya” with the support of the City Council.
- On July 22, 2023 another session was held in which 106 participants from various places attended this particular training.

The active participation of local police has played a pivotal role in fostering trust and laying the groundwork for a more secure environment for women. The mayor of Zafarraya welcomed the women, and his support symbolizes a genuine commitment to addressing the challenges they face during their stay and ensuring that their rights are respected. This collaborative effort between law enforcement and local leadership marks a significant step forward in creating a community that prioritizes the well-being and rights of all the women involved into the activities.

The training sessions were conducted by an interdisciplinary team comprising intercultural mediators, a psychologist, and a career counsellor. The topics covered, included:

- self-care,
- boundaries,
- basic labor rights,
- job stability,
- education,
- registration,
- access to the healthcare system,
- interaction with institutions and
- racism.

2. Evaluation

Fifteen surveys were completed by participants, in which they rated the content on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being the lowest and 4 the highest. The evaluation results showed that the content covered during the workshop has enabled participants to learn about the rights of migrant women:

- Most of the responses to the questions on training received a maximum evaluation (4 out of 4).
- In the comprehensive assessment of participant feedback, noteworthy observations were made regarding areas that require additional attention or were inadvertently omitted. These encompassed a spectrum of crucial subjects such as housing, contractual matters, exploration of family roots, and the intricacies associated with the asylum process. Participants expressed a desire for more in-depth exploration and discourse on these topics to enrich their understanding and facilitate a more holistic engagement with the subject matter.



Training in Ventas de Zafarraya (Granada)

1. Participants and Content of the training

The training event was held on July 28 and 29 attended by 90 Moroccan women.

The provided content was similar to the training in Zafarraya (see above) due to the lack of collaboration of the Municipality of Ventas de Zafarraya. The training sessions were conducted by an interdisciplinary team consisting of intercultural mediators, a psychologist, and a career counselor. The topics covered, included:

- self-care,
- boundaries,
- basic labor rights,
- job integration,
- education,
- registration,
- access to the healthcare system, • relationship with institutions and
- racism.

The participants expressed a particular interest in various topics such as overall well-being, registration procedures, basic labor rights, self-care, job integration, proof of integration through education, and obtaining a health card.

2. Evaluation

The evaluation was generally positive, with the majority of responses at the maximum (4 out of 4).

The participant feedback evaluation revealed distinct areas of heightened interest, focusing on subjects such as registration processes, labor rights, self-care practices, and the exploration of rootedness in personal and professional contexts. Participants expressed a strong desire for extended discussions and targeted sessions to deepen their understanding of these specific topics. On the other side, the comprehensive evaluation identified areas that were either missing or insufficiently addressed, including concerns about denouncing companies, addressing gender based violence, navigating family roots and homologation upon return, and handling document loss like passports. Participants emphasized the need for more thorough discussions and targeted interventions in these critical areas for a more informed and comprehensive engagement.



Contents and Evaluation of the Dynamizers

Amigos de Marruecos played a pivotal role in facilitating the conducted activities. As a local organization, they demonstrated a keen understanding of the context, situations, and local realities, allowing for a more inclusive reach to participants. Their ability to adapt the content to their profound knowledge of the territory significantly contributed to the effectiveness and relevance of the engagement.

- The contents addressed crucial issues for migrant women, such as registration, rootedness, labor rights, access to health services, and abuses and deceptions.
- The evaluation of the facilitators was positive, with the awareness of the need to go deeper into topics such as asylum, gender violence, homologation of titles, family roots and denunciation of companies.

It was suggested that training should be shorter, continuous and cyclical, with practical visits to institutions, and the sexual and reproductive health of women who suffer various types of abuse should be addressed in depth.

Training in Huelva

Date: September 28th, 2023. From 18:00 to 20:00.

Objective: a) increased migrant women's capacity to participate in WE-EMPOWER program; b) increase the capacity of migrant women to actively participate with civil society organizations and local authorities. And c) increased awareness of the political role of migrant women in contributing to more egalitarian societies.

Total Attendees: Participation of 19 women, mostly migrant and domestic workers.

Location: Training held in El Almendro, Huelva.



1. Opening

The event was presented by Mery Martínez Suarez, president of the Latin American Association Huelva para Todos. She presented the services offered, including courses, workshops, legal advice and coordination with the Food Bank.

During the workshop there was space for the reflections by Isabel Brito Cabeza on the self-organization of domestic and care workers, highlighting good practices of associations in both Latin America and Spain.

Following, Dayanna Hochmuth presented the Project **CUIDA 5+**. The aiming of the intervention was to provide them with up-to-date information on domestic work and caregiving. The participants were encouraged to access the project's website and take advantage of the free courses offered. The Cuida 5+ Project serves as an information, meeting, and advisory service in the household and caregiving sector, targeting both employers and domestic workers, primarily migrant women facing extreme vulnerability.

Given the unequal distribution of household and caregiving responsibilities between men and women, with a majority of migrant women in precarious situations, the Cuida 5+ project seeks to provide training and tools to establish dignified labor relationships. It also aims to offer accessibility and guarantees to those in need of care or support in domestic work and contribute to incorporating a care perspective into the functions of local entities and small businesses.

2. Conclusions:

It has been assessed that the participants needed more time to further elaborate on specific issues, including the regulatory framework and access to training. Due to the time running short it was not possible to do a final session and discussion due to participants' work responsibilities. In sum, the project has achieved several training and awareness-raising objectives, but there is a need to address some issues in more depth in future sessions.

Training in Igualeja

Date: September 28th, 2023. From 18:00 to 20:00, at the same time at the training above

Content: The event served as a dynamic platform for knowledge enhancement, skill development and community building, exemplifying the commitment to empowerment and education in the spirit of unity and the activities have been facilitated with the cooperation of Flavia Anahy. The impactful training session was meticulously organized under the auspices of the esteemed: "Alcadesa del Municipio de Igualeja" and facilitated by the dedicated team at the "Asociación de Cuidadoras sin Papeles de Igualeja". As a result it unfolded a transformative agenda on the evening of September

Total Attendees: A diverse cohort of 30 participants, each eager to actively engage in an enriching discourse, fostering personal and collective growth.



Training Events in Extremadura

II Meeting of Migrant Women in Extremadura Migrant Leaders: TOGETHER WE ADVANCE

Date: November 11th, 2023

Objective: Promote associationism among migrant women in the region. Generate a support network to facilitate the inclusion of migrant women in the society of the whole region of Extremadura, Spain. The main focus was to promote dialogue, collaboration, and empowerment of migrant women in the region.

Total Attendees: 41 adults and 13 children, 39 women, 8 girls, and 5 boys, 2 men. Originally from Nicaragua, Venezuela, Colombia, Bolivia, Honduras, Peru, Ecuador, Georgia, and Ukraine.

Location: Civic Center, Almendralejo, Badajoz.

1. Opening

The event was inaugurated by Maryórit Guevara, the president of the Migrant Women's Movement; Tania Irias, the coordinator of the Migrant Women's Movement headquarters; Solange Jarquín, founding member of the Migrant Women's Movement; and Juliana Estela Megías, councilwoman of Almendralejo. The activity was contextualized within the framework of the agreement with Alianza por la Solidariedad- ActionAid.

"We appreciate the presence of each migrant woman because we understand the challenges of the absence of networks, the lack of co-responsibility, and the difficulty of reconciling family life with long working hours... and with the hope that by the end of the day, we emerge stronger and more organized," said Guevara.

2. Political and Social Context

After the registration, the distribution of the prepared materials, and the opening of the event, a talk was held on the political and social context in Spain concerning how it impacts the lives of migrant women. The talk was given by Mercedes Rodríguez, a member of the Network of Latin American and Caribbean Women and the La Comala cooperative. Rodríguez focused on analyzing the issues faced by migrant women due to their administrative and origin status.

Participants actively mentioned situations that put them at risk, such as:

- Labor exploitation in the care sector.
- Limited or no access to healthcare.
- Limited access to professional training.
- Difficulty in registering and renting a flat.
- Racism and xenophobia against migrant children, among others.

The second part of the talk focused on raising awareness about the need to be organized collectively to face system vulnerabilities, especially at a time when anti-rights and anti-democratic discourses have intensified.

3. Workshop building capacity around associations

Facilitated by activist Solange Jarquín, the workshop aimed to familiarize participants with associationism. It began with introductions, assessing participants' knowledge about associations, management, and legal frameworks. Key concepts and the registration process were covered, followed by internal association management, legal considerations, and the importance of financial

planning. The presentation emphasized the roles of members, staff, and volunteers, stressing proactive collaboration. Participants, interested in Migrant Women's Movement cells, formed groups to address specific needs in their territories.

Some groups shared their needs, revolving around:

- Access to public transportation.
- Labor rights and obligations.
- Access to professional training.
- Regularization processes.
- Combating hate speech, racism, xenophobia, and aporophobia (meaning the negative attitude and hostility towards poverty and poor people).
- Combating bullying cases in their children's schools, a topic that has gained relevance in the region recently.

4. Communication workshop

The second part of the event was shortened to one hour because the majority of allies who attended the event had to leave. Not due to lack of interest but because of transportation difficulties in Extremadura, especially as there are few buses that leave for other locations on weekends.

However, the 10 women who stayed until the end proposed opening a debate about the association's work and their expectations. They also initiated a conversation circle about specific issues that concern them. This provided an opportunity to discuss the Comprehensive Care Plan for Migrant Women Victims of Gender Violence implemented by the Migrant Women's Movement in Extremadura, which has assisted over 100 migrant women throughout the region. This talk led to discussions about other delicate day-to-day issues that women face and in which they are vulnerable due to their migrant status.

In follow up, the Migrant Women's Movement has committed to meeting online in January to define dates and hold meetings formalizing the organization of cells of the Migrant Women's Movement in the territories.

Outcomes

The activity met the set objectives and even motivated participants to create cells in other areas of Extremadura where the Migrant Women's Movement did not have representation until now.

- A verbal agreement to form cells during the first quarter of 2024 was sealed, starting with an initial online meeting to which participants in this II MEETING OF MIGRANT WOMEN IN EXTREMADURA will be invited.
- The activity led to more recognition of the value of being organized, the battles won, the space conquered, and, in general, the progress made during 2023 as organized migrant women.
- It succeeded in socializing and highlighting the needs of migrant women in the face of an adverse context that exposes.

Final conclusions

In conclusion, we emphasise the great impact that these activities have had in strengthening the process that Alianza is carrying out in Spain with migrant women's associations and that fits in with the WE-EMPOWER project's line of recognising migrant women as political subjects and subjects of rights.

The success of these activities and the large number of women who have participated, exceeding the indicators, is due to the work carried out through participatory processes and methodologies. It has been the women themselves who have proposed the activities, their contents, chosen methodology, etc. It should also be noted that the dynamisation and training have been carried out by professional migrant women and migrant associations, with an impact on the recognition of the knowledge of migrant communities and as key agents in the empowerment of the associations.

Finally, we would like to highlight the increase in networking between migrant women's associations that has taken place in these spaces, which is key to coordinated work and greater impact in the defence of their rights. In addition, these activities have served to generate dialogue and advocacy spaces with local authorities in the different territories: mayors, councillors and police. It has been an opportunity for authorities and institutions to hear directly from the voices of migrant women their demands and proposals to improve their life situations through access and recognition of rights.

At Alianza we understand that participation, networking and political advocacy are key to fighting against the barriers that are configured around migrant women and that place them in contexts of vulnerability, therefore, these activities have been important to think of common actions and processes for the great diversity of migrant women.

