

MINIMUM QUALITY STANDARDS FOR PROGRAMMES IN PRISON FOR MEN PERPETRATORS AND WOMEN SURVIVORS OF GENDER VIOLENCE

Within SPREAD, spreading throughout Europe expertise and intervention programs in prison with men perpetrators and women survivors of gender violence, in-prison interventions with both men perpetrators and women survivors of gender violence (GV) will be carried out.

It is known that the reality of the penitentiary context and the social and legal situation might be different in each country. Therefore, in order to have successful interventions, each partner of the project, and any further replications of in-prison programmes, should adapt the programmes to the specificities of their context.

However, in order to carry out coherent interventions and to ensure quality in the in-prison programmes, the partners of the project defined¹ a set of minimum standards for the implementation of the in-prison interventions. The aim of this document is to present these agreed minimum standards, which should be used when designing, planning and executing the in-prison interventions. The minimum standards refer to both theoretical and methodological considerations regarding the design and implementation of the in-prison programmes.

OBJECTIVES OF THE IN-PRISON INTERVENTIONS

Women's programmes

General objective:

To offer a space for support to imprisoned women who have suffered gender violence

Specific objectives:

- To facilitate the identification of situations/relationships based on gender violence and provide basic resources to deal with them
- To facilitate awareness of how the gender system is related to unequal relationships that may result in gender violence and how this situation damages women's rights
- To offer the possibility to work on the consequences that having suffered gender violence has on women and their relationships
- To offer psychological support, if needed, after release
- To restore the damaged feminine identity and to promote the strengthening of self-esteem and empowerment

¹ The Minimum Common Standards were defined during the training session with all partners that took place in Barcelona on April 1, 2009, in the framework of the kick-off meeting of the Spread project. This document is based on what was said then and on the information already existing on the ALTRA project manual ('Tackling gender violence in prison. Manual of in-prison programmes against gender-based violence'. SURT, 2008)

² 4th World Women's Conference. Platform of Action – item 113

³ Nash, M. (2001) *Multiculturalismos y género. Un estudio interdisciplinar*.

Men's programmes

General objective:

To initiate changes in men's belief system so that they no longer think that they have the right to be violent to women.

Specific objectives:

- To ensure and foster women's and children's safety
- To raise awareness on men's ways of behaviour in our society which are based on the belief that women are inferior to men
- To raise awareness on the unacceptability of any form of violence against women
- To promote men's responsibility of their abusive behaviour

COMMON THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Common understanding of GV. From a gender perspective, GV must be understood as the use of force where the imbalance of power is determined by the inequality among men and women in their roles in society. The definition of GV proposed by the 4th World Women's Conference is absolutely appropriate: a social phenomenon which consists in 'any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life'².
2. The gender perspective must be the cornerstone of all interventions. Gender is understood as a social construction of ideas and normative values that indicate men's and women's roles in society. It is also understood as the normative characteristics that men and women have in creating their subjective identity; and, the normative characteristics that men and women have in relationship of power between them³.
3. The theoretical framework should have a multidisciplinary, systemic approach. The programmes should include aspects from different areas of knowledge, such as:
 - 3.1 Sociology and Social psychology: understanding the convenience of researching social phenomena using small units of analysis, and studying people's experiences in specific contexts.
 - 3.2 Gender studies or feminist social analysis, psychosocial and communitarian approaches, which understand that violence against women is not a private matter, nor a natural consequence of the relation between men and women. On the contrary, it is a historical process produced and reproduced by gender-based domination in social structures and consolidated by a patriarchal and andocentric culture. Violence against women is understood as a structural problem and an expression of social order based on

the inequality between women and men. It is necessary to include psychoeducational and not only psychotherapeutic objectives .

3.3 Psychological approaches,⁴ which are useful to help people to identify, understand and modify certain behaviours. In this sense, the following approaches are considered especially important in the design and implementation of the programmes:

- Ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This is a theoretical framework which defends an integral, systemic and naturalistic method to investigate psychological development. The model holds that the relationship between individuals and the environment is circular, so that different settings have an impact on the individual, and at the same time, the individual has an active influence on the setting in her/his different levels, establishing a dynamic and reciprocal transformation. The so-called 'ecological ambient' is a system structured in a series of 3 subsystems that are inclusive of one another:
 - Macrosystem, meaning organisational ways, belief systems, lifestyle and general patterns in culture. In the framework of the in-prison programmes tackling gender violence, the macrosystem refers to the patriarchal system, the vertical belief system, the conception of power and obedience, gender stereotypes, etc.
 - Exosystem, meaning the mediator institutions between the macro and the microsystem, such as the school, the church, the mass media, the labour market and the judicial and security bodies. These institutions reproduce the vertical and authoritarian vertical power model, which legitimates violent behaviour and the second traumatising at an individual level.
 - Microsystem, which includes close relations to the individual. The basic structure is the family and its structural elements, beliefs, behaviours, conflict resolutions, authoritarianism, self-esteem, etc. The individual level includes four psychological dimensions: cognition, conduct, emotion and interaction.

In the design and implementation of the in-prison programmes, these 3 levels must be taken into consideration. It is essential that the in-prison interventions tackle gender-based violence taking into account the interrelation of all these levels.

- Narrative therapy: this theory takes into account the fact that each human being is born into a social world and therefore confronted with interpretations, explanations and expectations which serve as a framework for all further experiences. Since all these social processes are mediated by language, it becomes very important what a person is told about how the world is functioning. These *stories* or *narrations* give guidance for further life experiences and help us to interpret all events. The philosophical term '*deconstruction*' (Derrida, 1988; Foucault, 1972) was developed as an answer to the question of how to change such narrations.

⁴ You will find more information of each of these theoretical approaches in the ALTRA manual: http://www.surt.org/altra/docs/manual_angles.pdf

- Theory of the link: it is based on the importance of the relationship established between a (woman) therapist and a woman who has suffered gender violence in order to tackle and address it.
- Cognitive behaviour theories: the essential idea of this approach is that a person's core beliefs contribute to *automatic thoughts* that pop up in everyday life in response to different situations.
- Client-centred therapy: it states that every individual has the resources for her/his personal development and growth. It is the role of the counsellor to provide the favourable conditions for the natural phenomenon of personal development to occur.

COMMON METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

COMMON METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS TO BOTH PROGRAMMES

1. It is necessary to have a deep knowledge of the penitentiary context and know the mechanisms and regulations of the institution, in order to be able to adapt the implementation of the programmes accordingly. Furthermore, it is essential to be aware of the impact that the penitentiary system has on both target groups.
2. Concerning the professionals, it would be desirable that the programmes were implemented by external professionals (psychotherapists) who are independent from the penitentiary mechanisms. An assistance and therapeutic role and a role of control are incompatible. However, if prison staff are the ones running the programme, they should be trained on gender and gender violence issues. The therapeutic relationship must be based on:
 - a. Confidentiality: it allows a deeper implication of the participants, as this information is not going to condition the running of the penitentiary processes.
 - b. Voluntariness: a real therapeutic process must be voluntary and have an intrinsic motivation. As prison is a space of non-freedom, if the programme is run by penitentiary staff, participation will never be truly voluntary.
 - c. Trust: it will be easier to establish a bond of trust with an external professional, which may allow a more horizontal relationship with the participants compared with the penitentiary staff, who have power over inmates.
3. In order to have a successful implementation of the programme, it is essential to maintain a cordial relationship and coordination with the prison staff. The boundaries of the information which is going to be transferred should be agreed upon from the beginning. All the information related to formal and general aspects is perfectly shareable. However, information concerning personal and private issues must be kept in confidentiality.
4. The recommended requisites of the professionals who are going to run the programmes are diverse:
 - a. The professionals should have a background and experience as psychotherapists.

- b. A background in social work with experience in gender violence is also very appropriate.
 - c. As it is recommended for the groups to be run by two persons, a good balance could be that one of them had more experience in the clinical field and the other in the social field.
 - d. In any case, training and experience in gender violence with a gender approach is absolutely imperative.
5. Regarding the number of professionals implementing the programmes, it is recommendable for the sessions to be carried out by a minimum of two facilitators. The advantages are as follows: two people make it possible to exchange impressions which will enrich the perception of the group dynamics; this allows to focus on one participant without losing the attention of the rest of the group; it represents a model for a cooperative and respectful relationship and also allows for mutual support between the two professionals.
6. Concerning the sex of the facilitators:
 - a. As regards the women's programme, both facilitators should be women, for the following reasons: social identity is divided by sex and the participants can identify themselves with a person of the same sex, as the facilitator may have lived similar experiences related to an imbalance of power to a larger or lesser extent and may be able to have a better understanding of the participant's situation. On other hand, as the participants have been hurt and humiliated by men, it is easier for them to establish a bond of support with other women rather than men. The possibility of a man running the women's programme could be only accepted if women inmates feel comfortable with it.
 - b. Concerning men's programmes, it is recommended to have a man and a woman as facilitators. A mixed team can be an example of open, clear and equal relationship and communication between a man and a woman, as well as a way of establishing a cooperative framework of behaviour and roles. Furthermore, the presence of a woman allows for confronting and questioning stereotypes on women. However, if there are either a two men or two women highly prepared to develop the programme, there should not be any problem.
7. As regards the selection criteria of the participants of the programmes, it is important to state the following:
 - a. Women's programme: the target group is women who have suffered gender violence before imprisonment. However, it should be also open to women who have not identified themselves as having suffered gender violence yet, and also to any other woman who is interested in the matter. The selection criteria are:
 - to be interested in participating in a programme supporting women who have been victims of gender violence
 - not to suffer serious psychopathologies that could interfere in the normal participation in the programme (deep depressive spirit, aggressive behaviour, paranoia, etc.)
 - not to suffer addictions that could be and obstacle for the proper running of the programme

- to accept the basic rules of the programme
- b. Men's programme: the target group is men sentenced and imprisoned because of violence against women. However, it is also open to any inmate who is willing to participate, whatever his sentence or crime may be. The selection criteria are the same of the women's programme, plus:
 - to be motivated to begin a process of change and be willing to participate in the programme actively
 - to be ready to talk about one's own violent behaviour

The selection of the participants should be done by the therapist on the basis of the information that the prison staff will transfer.

8. Before starting the implementation of the programme, it might be a good idea to carry out both individual and group sessions in order to motivate the inmates to participate into the programme.
9. The first session of the programmes should be dedicated to setting up the rules of the programme. On the other hand, it is necessary to explain what the programmes is going to be about in order to not create false expectations. It might be a good idea that each participant writes down his/her own objective and goals regarding his/her participation in the programme.
10. Regarding the type of the sessions, it is recommended to carry out both individual and groups interventions in order to ensure the covering of therapeutic issues as well as psychoeducational aspects.
11. With regard to **ethical issues**, in-prison programmes must be implemented taking into account the following elements:
 - a. Concerning prison inmates, both male and female:
 - o Voluntary participation of male perpetrators and women having suffered GV in the therapy group must be ensured
 - o No additional rewards are granted for participation
 - o Confidentiality. For instance, in the selection process professionals will be especially careful to make sure that there is not labelling of the participants as survivors of GV. Moreover, personal information will only be revealed in individual sessions, while the group sessions will be based on psychoeducative aspects. Therefore, therapists will respect strict confidentiality norms unless in situations when a man declares straight out that he has violent intentions towards his family
 - o Therapists are in charge of the selection of group members, initial interviews and final decisions
 - o Therapists respect strict confidentiality norms
 - o Crime-related information is not used against group members
 - o Further rules of operation are discussed in detail and agreed with the prison administrations, taking into account prison regulations and security rules
 - o Proper background of the therapists to avoid second traumatisation to women, and counter-indicated interventions with men

b. Concerning prison staff, reference to gender mainstreaming as a transversal issue that pervades all the programmes in the penitentiary centre should be assured.