

WEGO!

Co-funded by the Rights,
Equality and Citizenship (REC)
Programme of the European Union



WE GO!

JUST/REC-RDAP-GBV-AG-2017- Prevent and combat gender-based violence and violence against children

Individualised Social Relationship Plan



The importance of the empowerment process of women victims of gender-based violence is stressed out by the literature since the arousing of the theory of the empowerment as way out power unbalances¹. Powerless groups or individuals become empowered with the access to resources, opportunities, information and support. The role of social services and of other actors within the empowerment process of women consists, in example, of providing linking opportunities, offering psychological support, giving the access to information and knowledge and sustaining women in making choices. Within this theoretical framework, the WEGO2! Project approach moves from the acknowledgement of the importance of three dimensions, intervening through the whole process of socio-economic empowerment. First, **the relevance of the social relationship** and of the personal network of the woman, as potential source of positive influence on victim of GBV. In addition, the impact that a solid social network may generate on woman is analyzed by the literature: the evidences show that the presence of supportive individuals may decrease the effect of long-term abuse², as well as the consequences, in terms of vulnerability increase, of lack of access to the social network for women and girls in period of crisis³. Second, the project activities focused on the willing and **preferences of women through their own career path**, providing the operators with tools to support women in planning a way to knowledge increase and skills acquisition. Third, within the empowerment process, the project took into account the issue of **strategic actions to facilitate the links between women and employers**, sustaining them in undertaking steps for the entrance in the labor market.

The three dimensions addressed within the project activities were evaluated through the use of specific tools, presented in the sections below, that allowed the monitoring and evaluation of women's paths.

1.1 The "Social relationships" tool: adopted approach and methodology

The activities of support and empowerment of IPV women survivors is a high-complex process that involves multiple spheres of personal life. To this end, within the WEGO2! Project, IRS developed a tool in order to allow women to explore the features and the potentiality of their social network with the support of AVCs operators. The tool and its relative analysis is in line with what already undertaken for exploring partners' and AVC's networks (see respectively Deliverable 38 and 18) that moves from social network theory but, at the same time, given the application outside the research areas, proposes simplified tools to be used directly by women, operators and partner.

The design of the Social Relationships tool (SR further on), proposed by IRS, passed through a participative process that involved all project partners during the 2019. At the beginning of 2020 the partners provided training activities to the AVCs operators in order to use the tool with the women. The impact of these training activities in terms of knowledge increase are presented in the Deliverable 18 - Knowledge impact analysis, together with the final evaluation that the operators involved in the training provided at the end of the implementation phase. Work activities with women covered the whole 2020 and the beginning of the 2021. This means that the significant changes brought in by the outbreak of the pandemic should be taken into account for the whole analysis of the implementation of the SR tool.

Given the links between social relationships of women, their way out to IPV and their empowerment processes, the main aim of the activity was to encourage the reflection on the importance of the social links,

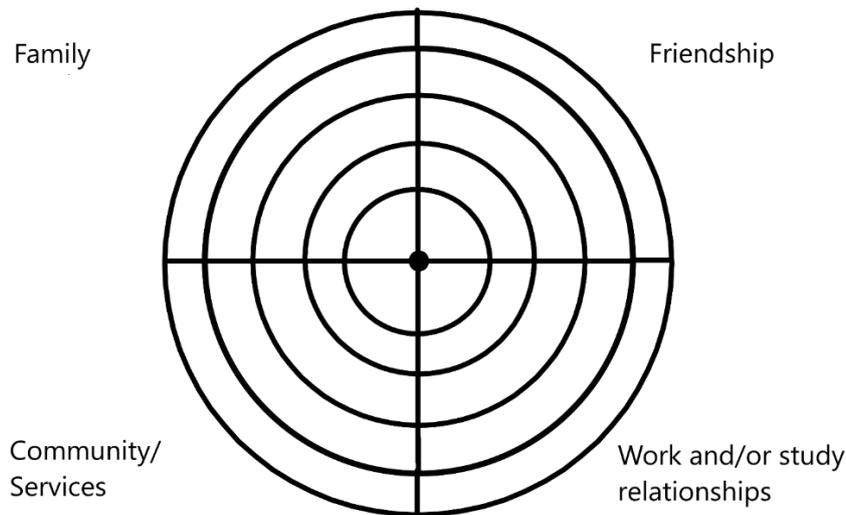
¹ Busch NB, Valentine D. Empowerment Practice: A Focus on Battered Women. *Affilia*. 2000

² Katerndahl D, Burge S, Ferrer R, Becho J, Wood R. Differences in Social Network Structure and Support Among Women in Violent Relationships. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 2013

³ John, N, Casey, SE, Carino, G, McGovern, T. Lessons Never Learned: Crisis and gender-based violence. *Developing World Bioeth*. 2020

as well as to explore the potential expansion of the network with regards to every sector of life. The sectors considered are the family, the friendship, the work and/or study relationship and the community and services. In order to achieve this objective, the woman should have fill in, with the support of the operators, a graph or a table (according to the operator preferences) for describing her relationships in term of intensity (frequency of contacts) and perception (positive/negative relationships). Due to the pandemic emergency, the tool, originally conceived for the in-presence use, was also adapted for being filled in through a telephonic/online meeting between the woman and the operator. All AVCs operators were provided with guidelines in order to correctly implement all the phases of the work with women.

Figure 1 - SR Graphic tool



Legend	
Intensity of relationship:	Perceptions of relationship:
Circle 1: every day	++: very positive relationship
Circle 2: every week	+: positive relationship
Circle 3: every month	=: neutral relationship
Circle 4: every three month	-: negative relationship
Circle 5: never o rarely	--: very negative relationship

During the implementation phase of SR tool, the data collection happened along three moments/meetings. During the first one each involved woman was asked to describe how her current network appeared in terms of people included, intensity and perception of the relationships. This represents the starting point of the social relationships development activities. The graphic visualization of the tool is composed by 5 circles and the woman is at the center. Each circle identifies different intensities of relationships depending on the distance of the circle from the center where the woman is (1-5 circles). In the first circle, the woman drew the people that she sees/speaks with on regular basis (every day), in the second circle the people that she sees/speaks with at least once a week, in the third at least once a month, in the fourth at least once every 3 months and, in the fifth circle, the people that the woman never/ or rarely sees/speaks with. Each person included in each circle had to be specified with one among the following signs: + (plus), - (minus) o = (equal sign). Each sign represented very positive (++), positive (+), negative (-), very negative (--) or neutral (=) relationships experienced by the woman with reference to each person inserted in her network. Setting different levels of intensities (circles) and different perceptions of the relationships (signs +,-,=) allowed to

compare and evaluate the evolution of woman's network, according to her objectives. The AVC professional should also have provided a short description of this first phase of the activity, with some more qualitative elements to better explain the specific case and made it possible to interpret hereafter the movements/changes that might have taken place. The representation of the network of women at the beginning of the activity was also used as pre-evaluation in the pre-post testing process presented below.

After the first meeting with the operator, the women filled in the network objective that represent the target to be achieved within the activity. The process of network expansion or enforcement had to be planned according to the personal history of the woman, her needs and her possibilities. The woman was invited to think on the question: "How can I expand my network?". The professionals provided also the woman with some hints or advices, after having wisely evaluated the woman conditions: meeting people in different contexts, enrolling in courses or workshops, participating in associations, joining friendship groups, strengthen the ties with the neighbors or the family. In some cases, the woman had as well evaluated the negative influence of some people in her life, and reflected on strategies to reduce their impact. With the support of the operators, the woman prepared an action plan that gathered objectives and actions to be undertaken in order to achieve her relational targets. Within this activity, the role of AVC's operators was fundamental to support the woman and to help her to understand the objectives and the strategies to work through along the whole project duration.

During the months of the activity, the operator monitored the progresses and the critical issues encountered by the woman, until the final meeting where the final picture of the SR tool has had to be filled in by the woman. Together with the analysis on the final network of the woman, the operator synthetically reported the rate of achievement of the objectives (totally achieved, partially achieved, not achieved) and eventually additional comments on the woman's path.

The final picture of the SR tool together with the initial drawing were thus used to implement a pre-post testing evaluation. This allowed IRS to outline main findings and conclusion in the framework of the assessment of the project impact on woman empowerment. Pre-post testing is a measurement of the learning received during an exercise (in this case the testing of the different activities produced by the project) as a result of comparing what the 2 targets knew before in a pre-test and after the experience in a post-test. This tool is of particular use to quantify the knowledge attained from a group of people with diverse learning styles and educational backgrounds like the 2 target groups involved in the project. More specifically, the tests indicate how the target groups "are learning". Reasons for using a pre-test are the following: to measure a starting point or the amount of pre-existing knowledge on a given topic, to compare with the starting point of a post-test, to inform the management about topics that are/are not needed to cover based on 2 targets, previous knowledge. Reasons for using a post-test are the following: to measure the learning as a result of the project experience, to analyze the appropriateness of the proposed tools.

1.2 Main findings

The SR Tool was implemented in four countries (Greece, Italy, Spain and Bulgaria) with 106 women. The participants in the projects were equally distributed across the countries. Before using the tool with the woman, the professionals of the involved AVCs were direct beneficiaries of training activities on theory and tools. The evidences emerged by training activities evaluation are available within the D18 of the WEGO2! Project - Knowledge impact analysis.

1.3 Evaluation methodology and the index of incidence

According to the pre-post testing model presented above, the implementation of the tools and the progresses of women’s social relationships network was evaluated for what concerns three dimensions:

- Measure of **incidence of relationships** on woman, according to an index (on a -10/+10 scale) that synthetizes the intensity and the perception of the relationship;
- General features of the networks and distribution of relationships across the life-sector, with specific attention to the woman objectives;
- Overall improvement of the networks, giving the starting point of each woman.

The measure of incidence of relationships was obtained considering the information provided by the involved women on the intensity of the relationship and perceived positivity or negativity. The intensity of the relationship was codified according to the following system:

Table 1 - Intensity of the relationships

	Value
Circle 1: every day	5
Circle 2: every week	4
Circle 3: every month	3
Circle 4: every three month	2
Circle 5: never o rarely	1

Similarly, the signs attributed to the perception of the women on the positivity or negativity of the relationships were codified according to values on a -2/+2 scale.

Table 2 - Perception of the relationships

	Value
++: very positive relationship	2
+ : positive relationship	1
= : neutral relationship	0
-: negative relationship	-1
- -: very negative relationship	-2

These factors were combined according to the following formula:

$$Incidence_{1w} = Intensity_{1w} * Perception_{1w}$$

Where “1” indicates the person in the network and “w” the woman describing her Social Relationship scheme.

Following this method, every person in the women’s network was indicated with a number from -10 to 10, that allows the evaluators to quantify the average incidence of people on woman life for what concerns both the general network and every life sector. Indeed, the idea behind the assessment is that a very negative relationship (-2) very present in the woman’s life (i.e, every week= 4), has an incidence value of -8. Following the same reasoning, a positive relationship (1) with a similar intensity (4), has an incidence value of 4. All the possible combinations between incidence and perception of the relationships are presented in the table below.

Table 3 Combinations between incidence and perception of the relationship

Incidence of the relationships		Perception				
		-2	-1	0	1	2
Intensity	1	-2	-1	0	1	2
	2	-4	-2	0	2	4
	3	-6	-3	0	3	6
	4	-8	-4	0	4	8
	5	-10	-5	0	5	10

According to the obtained values, the **index of incidence** was associated to a four-classes scale going from “extremely negative” (values from -10 to -5), to “extremely positive” (values from 5 to 10), following the classification below:

Table 4 Index of incidence values

Value	Incidence
-10	Extremely negative
-8	Extremely negative
-6	Extremely negative
-5	Extremely negative
-4	Negative
-2	Negative
-1	Negative
0	Positive
1	Positive
2	Positive
4	Positive
5	Extremely positive
6	Extremely positive
8	Extremely positive
10	Extremely positive

The measures of incidence and the classification of incidence were used through the whole analysis to quantify the evolution and the improvements of the networks, according to the pre-post approach.

1.3.1 Main results

Data available from the implementation of the tool were analyzed in order to describe the features of involved women’s network and their evolution. Overall, the women reported on average a network made up of 9 people each at the first picture and of 9.9 at the final picture. This means that **the networks’ dimensions have, on average, increased of almost 10% during the implementation of the activity with the women.** Observing the distribution of the relationships by life-sectors, at the first picture the prevalent category is that of “Family” (34.2% of the contacts), followed by “Community and Services” (26.5%), “Friends” (25.4%) and “Work and/or Study relationships” (13.8%). The final observation reports a similar distribution, with a slight decrease of “Friends” (22.7%) and “Work and/or Study relationships” (14.2%), and a little increase of

“Community and Services” (28.9%). Unfortunately, these variations cannot be analyzed independently from the outbreak of the pandemic, that reduced the opportunity to grow pre-existing relationships and to create new ones in the field of friendships and work/study. Thus, it could be assumed that the sector of community and services became stronger within the women life also for the role of supporting them during the evolution of the pandemic emergency. However, comparing the objective and the final picture of every woman, it emerges that the **43.7% of the women achieved what they have established as target distribution of relationships among life-sectors.**

In terms of **incidence index**, the table below summarizes the average values of the index by sector across the three pictures (initial picture, objective picture and final picture).

Table 5 Average values of the index by sector across the three pictures

	Family	Friendship	Work/Study	Community/Services	Overall
First picture	2	4	2	3	2
Objective	3	5	3	4	3
Final picture	3	5	3	4	3

As can be seen, all the values are within the “Positive” class, with the exception of the “Friend” sector that arrived at the “Extremely positive” class within the final data collection. Moreover, **all the indexes have on average increased from the first picture to the final one.** The family and the work/study sectors are those with the lowest incidence in both the pictures. On the other side, the community and services and the friend sectors present a higher incidence on women’s life. The most positive observation coming from the analysis of the average incidence is that, **for every sector, the value of the index corresponds to the average expected values set as targets in the definition of the objective.**

Another positive result emerging from the analysis of the incidence, that confirms the **overall trend of targets achievement within the project activities**, is highlighted by the percentage of contacts according to the incidence classification (extremely positive, positive, negative, extremely negative).

The Table 6 below presents the shares of relationships by incidence class, considering all the contacts of the women’s networks. As can be seen, there is a general increase of the relationships with positive and extremely positive incidence (90% at the final picture against 86.9% at the first picture) and a correspondent decrease of relationships with negative and extremely negative incidence (9.9% against 13.1%). Moreover, the distribution of relations by incidence in the final picture is coherent with that of expected achievements set in the objective picture.

Table 6 Shares of relationships by incidence class

Overall	Extremely Negative	Negative	Positive	Extremely Positive
First picture	5.3%	7.7%	62.3%	24.6%
Objectives	2.2%	3.6%	56.4%	37.8%
Final picture	3.1%	6.8%	59.6%	30.4%

The overall trend is confirmed for the disaggregated evaluation by life-sector, despite some minor differences between sectors, as shown in Table 7 below. The sector with the highest amount of negative or extremely negative relationships is the family (23.9% at the first picture and 17.9% at the final picture), followed by the work and/or study relationships (12.5% at the first picture, 8.6% at the final picture). In both cases, though,

an improvement during the project duration was registered. The life sector with the highest share of relationships with incidence extremely positive is the Friendship sector (34.5% at the final picture, increased by 8 pp from the first picture). In all the life-sectors considered, the improvements are in line with the targets set.

Table 7 Shares of relationships by incidence class and life-sector

Family	Extremely Negative	Negative	Positive	Extremely Positive
First picture	11.5%	12.4%	47.1%	29.0%
Objectives	5.6%	6.6%	53.8%	34.0%
Final picture	6.1%	11.8%	48.7%	33.3%

Friendship	Extremely Negative	Negative	Positive	Extremely Positive
First picture	1.7%	1.7%	70.0%	26.6%
Objectives	0.0%	0.9%	51.0%	48.2%
Final picture	2.2%	2.1%	61.3%	34.5%

Work and/or study relationship	Extremely Negative	Negative	Positive	Extremely Positive
First picture	3.1%	9.4%	71.7%	15.8%
Objectives	0.0%	7.3%	63.6%	29.1%
Final picture	0.9%	7.7%	65.8%	25.6%

Community and services	Extremely Negative	Negative	Positive	Extremely Positive
First picture	2.1%	6.6%	69.5%	21.8%
Objectives	0.0%	0.0%	61.9%	38.1%
Final picture	1.2%	4.1%	68.5%	26.2%

The evaluation of achievement with respects to the objectives set was also carried out by the operators, through the filling in of a specific table provided within the tool. According to the operators' evaluations, the 33.3% of the women has achieved all the objectives set, while the 58.6% has partially⁴ achieved them. This means that **the 92% of the women involved totally or partially achieved the objectives in terms of development of social relationships network.**

In addition, the distribution of the relationships of each woman by classes of incidence at first picture and final picture was compared in order to detect the improvements, independently from the objectives.

The comparison between the distribution of the two pictures allowed to rate the evolution according to the following grading system:

- *“The woman has improved her network”*, if the shares of “positive” or “extremely positive” have increased;
- *“The network has got worse”*, if the shares of “negative” or “extremely negative” increased;
- *“The network did not change from the initial pictures”*, if the distribution of the relationships by incidence remains equal.

⁴ The tool differentiated “objectives partially achieved” from “less than half objectives achieved”. Thus, the partial achievement indicates that more than half of the objectives set have been achieved.

The results of this rating system highlight that, overall, the **73.6% of women improved the distribution of relationships by incidence within the network**. On the other hand, the 15% does not show changes in the distribution of incidence. However, it should be specified that, among them, the 33.7% has already the totality of the relationships with a “positive” or “extremely positive” incidence. In addition, if we consider only the women that does not have at the first picture the totality of the relationships “positive” or “extremely positive”, the 80.6% of them reports improvements in the incidence distribution. In conclusion, the 26.9% of the women without all “positive” or “extremely positive” at the first picture achieved the totality of relationships with positive incidence at the final picture. The family represents the life-sector where more rooms for improvements have been found. On the opposite side, the work and/or study sector seemed to be the more static during the implementation phase of the SR tool.

The findings presented in this section highlight **the positive results detected in the development of the network of the women during the period of the use of the SR tool**.

Although the impossibility to establish a real causal connection between the project activities and the improvements reported by the operators and by the women themselves, the SR tool allows to draw some interesting conclusions.

First, **the mapping of the social relationships by life-sector represented an occasion for the woman to visualize and deeply think about the composition of her network**. This activity, usually carried out by AVCs operators without the support of specific tools, is strengthened by the implementation of the SR Tool.

Second, despite the outbreak of the pandemic, **the majority of the women has somehow improved their network according to the objectives and the targets set**.

Third, **the life-sector of the family is the one in which has been reported the most rapid change, while the work and study sector seemed to be less likely to rapidly evolve according to the objectives set**. From a sociological point of view, this may depend on the different features and characteristics required to modify the personal network of each of the two sectors. Indeed, the capacity of strengthen or modify the relationships within the family passes mainly through a set of psychological attitudes and personal history, while every change within the relationships of the work and/study sector implies a mix of proactive behaviors, actions undertaken and skills and competences development that need to consider also the outside environment. For these reasons, detecting a significant improvement in the sector of work and study may require a period of observation longer than the one to which we refer for the analysis of the SR tool results. However, it is worth stressing that, within the WEGO2! Project, the aspects of the empowerment processes of the women related to the skills and competences development were taken into account and addressed through the implementation of the career plan tool, the balance of competences and the job matching program as clearly outlined in the sections below.

Co-funded by the Rights,
Equality and Citizenship (REC)
Programme of the European Union



Partnership

The project involves 4 countries and six organizations:

ActionAid Italia, Italy

Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale (IRS), Italy

Rel.azioni Positive Società Cooperativa Sociale, Italy

Center for Sustainable Communities Development, Bulgaria

SURT - Fundació de dones, Spain

Women's Center Of Karditsa (WCK), Greece

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This toolkit has been produced with the financial support of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme of the European Union. The contents of this toolkit are the sole responsibility of ActionAid International Italia Onlus and the project partners and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.