



WOMEN'S ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE, A WAY OUT OF VIOLENCE:

**A TOOLKIT FOR ANTI-VIOLENCE
CENTRES OPERATORS**

Executive summary

WE GO! Women Economic-independence & Growth Opportunity
JUST/2014/RDAP/AG/VICT/7365

The WE GO! toolkit is dedicated to all survivors of intimate partner violence fighting for their economic independence.

This executive summary presents the purpose, contents and methodology of the toolkit produced in the framework of the WE GO! project by:

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We would like to thank the external experts and practitioners who contributed to the development of project's knowledge through their participation in our mutual learning events (in alphabetical order):

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November 2017

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

THE WE GO! PROJECT AND THE PURPOSE OF THE TOOLKIT

WE GO! (Women Economic-independence & Growth Opportunity) is a two-year project co-financed by the European Union focusing on a specific issue affecting women undergoing intimate partner violence (IPV): the lack of economic independence which prevents women from leaving a violent partner and ensuring sustainable alternatives for themselves and their children. The project has been implemented by 15 partners based in 7 EU countries (Italy, Spain, Greece, Bulgaria, Cyprus, United Kingdom and Sweden).

The **overall objective** of WE GO! is to strengthen support services for women undergoing IPV and in particular the activities run by anti-violence centres (AVCs) aiming to empowering women. The project builds on the experiences and practices developed by **AVCs** in the European Union in order to identify and spread promising practices to economically empower women and come out of IPV. The assumption behind the project is in fact that **AVCs have developed meaningful experience in this field that needs to be valued, exchanged and systematised in order to spread knowledge and strengthen services available in Europe.** IPV survivors' economic empowerment and independence is in fact an issue recognised by AVCs, but not adequately explored in policies and interventions to prevent and combat IPV.

This publication presents the structure, contents and methodology of the main output

of the WE GO! project: the **training toolkit for anti-violence centres operators**, aiming at both strengthening practitioners' knowledge and methodologies and providing them with concrete tools to reflect on their existing practices and to providing women in developing their personal and economic empowerment.

The toolkit is the result of **exchanges among practitioners of partner organisations and external experts** involved in the activities. WE GO! envisaged three mutual learning events aiming at exchanging practices, identifying key intervention areas and tools to empower women survivors of IPV and to evaluate the effectiveness of the toolkit.

A first draft of the toolkit was tested by the AVCs involved in the WE GO! project during the implementation of empowerment trainings targeting women survivors of IPV. The testing allowed to assess the effectiveness of tools and to adjust and finalise the toolkit on the basis of the feedback provided by both operators and women survivors involved in the WE GO! project.

The toolkit has been designed not only to improve practitioners' skills, but also to provide them with useful tools and methodologies to be embedded in their existing practices. AVCs in fact often suffer from financial strain and limited time and human resources in running even core activities; the WE GO! toolkit aims therefore to provide tools that do not imply any additional burden on AVCs, but rather represent **opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of their existing practices.**

CONTENTS AND STRUCTURE

The toolkit provides AVCs operators and practitioners both with theoretical guidance and practical tools to build survivors' personal and economic empowerment. The toolkit is divided in two main parts: **part A** aims at strengthening operators' capacity and skills through a **theoretical**

framework covering key concepts and methodological approaches based on the one hand on principles of participatory methodologies and on the other hand on how to develop specific skills to support survivors - such as building relationships and trust, listening, developing intuition etc. This part includes exercises to foster operators' reflection on their own approach and skills and tips to improve them.

KEY TOPICS IDENTIFIED BY ANTI-VIOLENCE CENTRES AS ESSENTIAL FOR PROMOTING SURVIVORS' ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND INDEPENDENCE

Strengthening anti-violence centres' response

Feminist Economics principles
Liberal adult education approach
Building networks
Housing and childcare

Building women's skills and empowerment

Personal activation and motivation
Assessing skills, knowledge and resources
Job placement
Entrepreneurship and self-employment
ICT skills and safe use of the internet

Elaboration by ActionAid, November 2017

Part B includes practical tools which operators can use to promote survivors' personal and economic empowerment. The tools cover different area of intervention such as developing personal competences and supporting networks, job techniques, self-

employment/entrepreneurship and ICT skills. Tools can be selected and adapted to the specific needs of each woman involved in the empowerment path and include both group and individual activities.

WE GO! TRAINING TOOLKIT CONTENTS: BUILDING PRACTITIONERS' CAPACITY

Theoretical and methodological framework

Gender-based violence

Empowerment

Feminist economics

Job counselling in anti-violence centres

Training methodologies: how to support IPV survivors to achieve their economic empowerment?

The organisational level: the importance of building networks

Gender-sensitive support measures to the economic empowerment of IPV survivors

Tools for operators' capacity building

Building relationships

Different levels of listening

Using intuition

Asking questions

Providing supportive feedback

Elaboration by ActionAid, November 2017

WE GO! TRAINING TOOLKIT CONTENTS: BUILDING SURVIVORS' CAPACITY

Methodological introduction: how to implement the WE GO! training for IPV survivors

Initial interview

From resources to competences, from dreams to goals and plans

Developing key competences

Gender awareness

Networks and collective empowerment

Job search techniques

ICT skills

Entrepreneurship

Elaboration by ActionAid, November 2017

PRINCIPLES AND APPROACHES

The toolkit has been elaborated on the basis of on **three core principles** related to resolving structural and individual barriers to economic empowerment and job entry, all with the goal of activating belief in the possibility of entering the job market and developing a career and not getting “just any job”:

- 1. Support services are crucial in achieving economic empowerment of IPV survivors.** A holistic approach in addressing all barriers IPV survivors face can maximise the likelihood of successful entry into the job market. These services help ensure that women’s issues – from mental health crises to childcare or unforeseen issues – can be addressed quickly, allowing women to stay focused on their economic empowerment and their career goals.
- 2. Getting “just any job” is not a pathway to self-sufficiency.** Low-wage, low-skill jobs do not have growth potential and do not lead to financial independence, and in most cases pit the marginal utility of effort against the distress and uncertainty of utilizing public assistance for survival. Women in poverty too often find themselves in an endless cycle of either holding on to dead-end jobs or being dependent on public assistance. Yet, these options do not provide stable disposable income or the chance for long-term economic independence. The empowerment approach of the WE GO!

toolkit shows women why this treadmill will not work for them and presents an alternative.

- 3. Rebuilding self-esteem, activating belief in career navigability, valuing civic development, counteracting hopelessness, dislocation and isolation,** caused by years of abuse and poverty. Women must believe in themselves and in their abilities to assess skills in order to succeed in applying for a job. They must believe in career navigability: the notion that there is logic to the marketplace and that access to their skills will lead to job entry.

The WE GO! toolkit proposes three methodological approaches to support IPV survivors in the process of economic empowerment, based on partners’ experiences in their organisations:

- 1.** Liberal adult education, a methodological approach to adult learning based on the principle of the life-long right of all people to freely seek knowledge on a free and voluntary basis. This approach is based on the experience of Folkuniversitetet centres in Sweden.
- 2.** Reflect-action, a participatory methodology used by ActionAid all over the world. It uses a range of participatory tools to help create an open, democratic environment in which everyone is able to contribute. Participants work together to analyse their situation, identify rights violations and bring about change.

3. Feminist empowerment approach, developed by feminist organisations in Europe and anti-violence centres in Italy. Methodologically, the empowerment approach translates in a process through which women:

- become aware of their right to have rights: identify situations of discrimination and subordination and the causes that generate them
- recognize and value their interests and their own authority, acquiring self-confidence and the legitimacy to be what they are
- reinforce their capacities and initiate processes of change towards the acquisition of power at the individual as well as the collective level.

HOW TO USE THE TOOLKIT

The toolkit presents a structure of empowerment programme targeting women survivors of IPV. The programme consists of different phases. For each phase, objectives are specified and a set of tools is provided to reach such objectives. These tools provide a very flexible framework within which it is possible to build specific and targeted programmes. There are in fact numerous activities that are proposed for each phase and which can be used to develop empowering paths on the basis of the specific characteristics, time-constraints, needs and interests of each participant and each group.

For each tool a description of its purpose

is provided, as well as step-by-step implementation guidelines and information about the time and resources needed.

Most of the tools rely on a group methodology, but they can be adapted to individual use. Working in peer groups has many advantages: they can, in fact, provide security, confidence and support to women. By sharing their experiences women realize they are not alone; they see that they share common difficulties with other IPV survivors and see that they are not responsible for everything that goes wrong in their lives; they share goals and strategies. Individual sessions might be also necessary to work more deeply into each woman individual objectives.

The activities proposed in the WE GO! project toolkit promote the active participation of women and participatory learning, inviting women to debate, analyse and explore the contents presented. The facilitator will promote communication and participation, introducing the topics and the activities to be developed by the women themselves, and ensuring the compliance with group working rules, making sure that all participants take part in the activities.

The facilitator will also foster the creation of a group atmosphere that favours the empowerment and personal development of the participants, creating a trustful and safe space.

WE GO!

Produced with the financial support of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme of the European Union. The contents 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.

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The WE GO! toolkit is available at this link:
www.wegoproject.eu/toolkit
or scan the QR code to access the toolkit

