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TOOLS TO WORK THROUGH OUT-REACH PROJECTS IN IRELAND

IMPRINT

SUNIA GEEL – Prevent and combat violence
against children, young people and women and to
protect victims and groups at risk

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Methodologies for Social Service Provision for Travellers affected by Domestic Violence

Tools to work within Communities through Out-Reach Projects

EXCHANGE HOUSE
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Domestic Violence – Introduction

Violence within families is a worldwide social problem. Besides children, women in particular are victims and the deeds go mostly unpunished. Estimates suggest that more women worldwide die within their own homes than as a result of war and civil war. Domestic violence is one of the most common human rights violations and is a result of structural power asymmetries within intimate relationships and families.

Violence hinders development: such traumatic experiences have a serious negative influence on the self-esteem of affected women and undermine their ability to be strong members of a strong civil society, who stand up for their rights. Furthermore, the damages caused by violence affect health, education and working ability. Therefore it contributes to poverty in affected families. (*Basics and Source: "Bread for the World"(Editor): Overcoming of domestic violence – A global challenge, Stuttgart 2007)*

Objectives of the tools

The tools are meant to offers social workers additional instrument to work with Traveller families affected by domestic violence within the framework of social service provision.
The tools concentrate on methods of awareness raising, self-awareness and of acceptance of the presence of domestic violence within families. The tools can be applied to support families in developing internal instruments to prevent domestic violence by understanding the reason of the problem and by understanding how domestic violence has been developing and has been dealt with within the family structure.

The tools help family members to better understand their role within the family-power-relations, to reflect upon the function of their position within the family and to learn how to find ways to overcome domestic violence.

If an exercise asks participants to write notes, self-reflective stories or other forms of written expression, these elements may also be replaced by oral stories or the social worker taking written notes on a flip chart. This method is suitable when working with illiterate participants.

NOTE: The tools are for social workers. The tools are not intended for use in psychotherapy-settings, for individual with psychological disorders due to severe trauma experience and are not intended for confrontational therapy settings between victims and perpetrators.

The tools provided in this booklet suggest the creation of local networks of various stakeholders to support social service provision within ethnic communities.

In addition, this tool present one best-practice example, the STOP-Network established in the City of Stuttgart, Germany, to prevent, fight and treat domestic violence.

The "Round Table Network" as part of the prevention of domestic violence in ethnic communities

Basics

A networking initiative of local and regional agents can especially encourage the establishment of "round tables" in order to develop interlinked action concepts and intervention programmes on a local and regional level in a concerted action of welfare institutions, youth work, migrant's associations, local authorities, school administrations, parents' councils, youth welfare, police and other partners. In many municipalities "round tables" already exist, they were established within municipal criminal prevention.

Aims

Reasons for "round tables" are pressing municipal topics in the area of the criminal prevention which are promoted by initiators (city administration, schools, other institutions, lobbies, individuals etc.). Aim is the dialogue with all involved groups and this is institutionalised in the form of a round table.

Duties of "round tables" are:

- Professional exchange, mutual information and discussion of important municipal topics regarding the prevention of violence
- Determination of the 'state of the problem' situations
- Development and planning of common concepts to constructively work on municipal problems
- Planning of a financing concept
- Conversion of planning into practical work (e.g. projects) through working groups, associations and citizens' groups
- Evaluation of results and feedback to the network.

Participants
The membership is basically open to everybody, initiatives and institutions which are interested in working on problematic situations and are similar in their concern, e.g.:

- Schools
- Parental and pupil's councils
- Police
- Local authority / town (social welfare office, youth welfare)
- Churches
- Youth welfare
- Associations
- Child day care establishments
- Companies
- Psychological advice centres
- Individuals
- Parents
- Youth welfare service organisation

Organisation

- A team (Managing social institution, facility, initiative, local agenda, individual) gets active in relevant questions regarding prevention of violence in a municipality and develops first objectives.
- The round table has to include administrative or municipal levels or stakeholders to guarantee that the round table is part of local or regional decision-making structures.
- All members of the round table have to be committed to make a change!
- All participants accept rules for discussion and decision-making.
- First work meetings are organised with potential cooperation partners (parents, schools etc.) which contain an agreement on aims, motives, resources and approaches within the municipal network.
- The "round table" organises itself into a control group and as far as necessary in work groups or sub-groups. These groups either divide work on a central topic from different points of view and / or broach the issue on different fields of work.
- If necessary, resources are created for the handling of the problems by the integration of internal or external experts. As areas of responsibility of the police are touched in various segments, an early participation of the police is recommended.

Success factors for functioning "round tables"

- The aims of the work groups must be formulated clearly and unambiguously (Who does what with whom till when?).
- The aims and structures offer a reliable framework for all participants.
- Decisive hierarchies are rather obstructive for efficient, creative and productive work- and discussion processes and should therefore be abandoned in favour of a work organisation which is characterised by equality among the participants.
- The interests, needs and resources of all partners must be transparent.
- Decision-making structures or rules and regulations for decision-making are agreed upon by all participants and are transparent.

Advantages of "round tables"

- The representatives of the different interest groups are equal partners in all committees.
- "Round tables" are open systems which admit the articulation of many interests and needs.
- They are motivating and activating for the different agents due to their transparency.
- Division of labour prevents stress and keeps the work motivation high.
- Interdisciplinary problem solutions are made possible.

Dangers and disadvantages of "round tables"

- There are different aims and expectations.
- The absence of a relevant conversation culture can lead to reluctance, excessive demand and even to the retreat from the task of the network.
- Lack of commitment and binding character of the round table.
- The absence of mandatory or obligatory rules for a round table which all participants agreed upon to follow.
- A too small number of participants (5 or less are not a "round table").
- Committees can degenerate to debating clubs which only have a low level of liability.
- Danger of failing in discipline and efficacy if the style of leadership within the groups creates no obligations of thematic, personnel and temporal kind.
- Failure in reaching the aims through unrealistic objectives also often leads to the retreat from the task of the network. Cooperation by itself is not enough - creativity with the gaining of partners for "social sponsoring" is becoming more and more popular.
- Successful cooperation is complicated in cases of high fluctuation of agents. Relations must be re-worked and defined anew, this costs energy and negatively affects motivation and commitment.
- Cooperation requires a realistic evaluation of the possible task results. The amount of work involved must bear reasonable proportion to the result. Unreasonable high expectations provoke disappointments.

Measures for increasing the effectivity of the "Round Table Network"

Plan activities together

The agents of the different work groups have to talk with each other in order to avoid conflicting schedules and competing events by transparent planning.

Resource search and use

Personnel, financial and neutral resources available should be used optimally.

Recruitment of members

In order to maintain and further develop the network, new partners have to be recruited. By doing so the work of "round tables" can gain a broader base.

Create information materials

The creation of printed information materials which are given to women in need, to families and which are handed out at schools are an important way to inform ethnic communities about the issue of domestic violence

School information days

The children often are door-openers to get access to families. Thus information days on domestic violence are a good way to inform the youngest members of a family about the issue. This information should be done in a very neutral way, not addressing a specific family or target group. The intention is to offer children a way to learn about domestic violence. The teacher will – at a later stage and several days after the presentation – ask his pupils and students about any feedback.

Central information pool

With bigger municipal projects it is recommended to gather information about different activities within the network in a common information pool. This offers insight, discussion and access possibilities to all network agents, e.g. via a dynamic data bank.

Service features among cooperation partners

- Central and common distributor of information and invitations of all work groups
- Common information pool which is accessible to all cooperation members (e.g. internet management of all relevant network info)
- Storage, management and representation of requirement data and inventory data of the network (members, finances, cooperation partners, advisers, referee's pool etc.)
- Search, organisation and realisation of advanced training within the network.