

RELIGION AND GENDER IN MIGRATION

Koycegiz, Turkey, May 6-11, 2011

PUBLIC REPORT



A project
led by:



In cooperation with:



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The programme and materials used in this
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Belieforama

Executive Summary

This project has created opportunities to explore the complex dynamic between culture, religion and gender identities as they can play out in the process of migration.

By facilitating exchange and cooperation amongst migrant Turkish women now living in Brussels, Belgium and women living in Koycegiz and Ankara, Turkey, the participants developed an appreciation for the diversity amongst them as an asset in creating environments where women are empowered social actors.

During a five day exchange seminar in Koycegiz, Turkey May 6-11, 2011, the participants have increased their awareness and skills to facilitate social and cultural transformation towards more inclusive societies.

The 20 women who participated in the training event from Belgium and Turkey were selected on the basis that they are active in their community via associations, public authorities, schools and other parts of civic society.



Methodology

The award-winning Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Training Programme and a new sub-module on Reconciling Religion and Gender were the key methodological resources for the exchange seminar through which the participants concentrated on developing cooperative social action plans for their respective local communities as well as across national boundaries¹.

In the training, participants engaged in a series of activities connected through a pedagogical process using intercultural learning methods. With highly interactive and participative activities, participants learn from each other with the guidance of the trainers (who use facilitating methods).

The seminar allowed time for extensive exploration of the issues of religion, culture and gender and how to address issues encountered in everyday life. The issues of religion and gender are of particular relevance to this group of women since through the process of migration, their relationship to their culture and their religious identity can change. For the women who have remained in Turkey this is a unique opportunity for them to meet with women now living in western Europe gaining important insight into life within a European Union country.

The pedagogical process is based upon significant research in the field that cites the following as key skills to develop in the prevention and unlearning of prejudice and discriminatory behaviours: *empathy, self-esteem, critical thinking, cooperative learning, high expectations, diverse environments, and social action*. This training programme has experimentally been adapted the diversity approach to religion issues, following a sequence of pedagogical concepts:

• *Building the Foundation* • *Identity* • *Cultural Awareness* • *Examining Prejudice and Discrimination* • *Confronting Prejudice and Discrimination* • *Social Action* • *Closing* • *Evaluation*

The pedagogical process was effective in its combination of personal awareness, interpersonal exchange, issue analysis and development of personal and social responsibility towards conscious action. Working amongst women offered a safe space to talk about issues which they might not have done in a mixed group, and it was an opportunity to connect women with other women who they might not normally have engaged on these issues (eg: traditional and religious with secular). For example, several of the women remarked on their learning on sexuality issues. A couple women from Belgium raised sexuality issues during the training – both as a gender issue (sexual and reproductive rights) as well as a sexual orientation issue.

¹ For more information on these two programmes, see www.belieforama.net.

From the evaluation forms:

“When I got my life card as homosexual and religious, first I thought it is impossible. Now I have changed my mind, it can be possible.”

“I was full of prejudice about the sexual orientation of people. Through this programme I have changed my approach.”



Evaluation

In general, the programme was deemed a success by partners, trainers and participants.

There were advantages and disadvantages to having a homogenous group in terms of being all of Turkish origin or in terms of being all “religious” and traditional (from Turkey, Belgian participants were more diverse).

On the one hand, the homogeneity provided safety to explore issues that some of the participants might have considered taboo. It also provided a context in which to concentrate their analysis of the dynamics surrounding religion and gender in migration. On the other hand, this homogeneity gave the impression to some of looking at Islam and gender more than at religion and gender, and for those who were more accustomed to a more diverse context, they felt a certain lack of variety in perspectives.

In the end, however, there was an appreciation for the make-up of the participants and the learning provided. For example, there was just enough diversity to open up new possibilities of lifestyle for those who had not previously been exposed.

And for those who were missing a more diverse group, they realised the value and importance of engaging with more traditional women as well as those who are already immersed in diverse realities.

This project also served the purpose of testing a new training module on “Reconciling Religion and Gender” with a group of Muslim women. The partners and trainers have evaluated that the methodology and content of this training programme under development are effective and relevant 1) in general; 2) in a Muslim context; and 3) in a women’s context:

“I learned new things everyday, little by little, step by step and the most surprising thing for me is that the seminar helped me to better know myself”

“Through this seminar I found in me a self-esteeming woman”.

“The programme was very pleasurable and unforgettable. I had chance to make brain exercises in the subjects which before I was not used to”

“It is so important get to know each other, female and male structures in the society, more tolerance, empathy.”

The post-workshop evaluation meetings were also very important to concretize and leverage the learning from the seminar. One participant from Ankara, a public leader, said:

“This evaluation, one and half month after the seminar, also made me aware that I was a passive participant of the seminars which I joined till now. Although I join so many conference and seminars I am not very active there. Even if I am active during the events I don’t apply the things which I learned there to my life or I don’t even think about them later. After this evaluation meeting I am aware of my passive participation and I will try to change it.”

Results

As a result of the seminar, participants decided:

"We want to start a new women platform in Koycegiz (which will offer) seminars for housewives to increase their awareness about their rights and to increase their awareness about discrimination. We will begin a project for the women who received violence in their family, (and do) awareness raising project between different religious or ethnic groups, like Alawi & Sunni or Kurd & Turk."

"Women murder has increased 1400 % in the last years in Turkey. They are killed by their husbands, father or brother. We would like to make a research project in this area.. Research about the murderer in prison. What was their motive to do it? Research about the family. Research in the media how these incidence are presented. All this research will be made from the point of vie of, religion and gender. This research will be made parallel in Turkey and Belgium in one year and the groups will meet three times, to speak about the questions and the method of the research in the beginning; to speak about the first result of the research after six months; to speak about the result of the research after nine month. At the end there will be written document."



Recommendations

The seminar experience could have given even more leverage with an elaborated preparation time with participants. Rather than an orientation meeting, it would have been ideal if they had already had some experience of the training beforehand to identify some of their own local issues more concretely.

Regarding the issue of diversity of the participants raised above in the evaluation, this really depends upon the objectives of the training and should be considered with consciousness by the organisers doing the recruitment based upon the long-term objectives.



Religion and Gender in Migration

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Programme Agenda

1st day, Friday May 6th

Start	End	Activity	Objective
14:00	14:15	Presentation of the course, programme and trainers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To introduce the training course, its objectives and framework
14:15	15:00	Get to know you	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To build familiarity between members of the group
15:00	15:45	Hopes and fears	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To clarify expectations towards the course
15:45	16:15	Grounds rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To create a safe environment and build trust among the present
16:15	16:45	BREAK	
16:45	17:45	Personal Artefacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To explore one own and other's identity
17:45	18:15	Evaluation of the day: Expectations for next day	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To evaluate training programme• To assess participants learning and feelings

2nd day, Saturday May 7th

Start	End	Activity	Objective
9:00	9:30	Check in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To create a safe environment and build trust among the present To assess participants learning and feelings
9:30	11:00	Identity (role models, collage)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying and connecting to role models as a personal form of inspiration; finding words and images. Raising awareness of the inner diversity of the identity and the way role models reflect this diversity from the outer world. Raising awareness of own identity re gender, sexuality and spiritual life. Development of a higher awareness of identity as a starting point to examine and raise contentious issues with others
11:00	11:30	BREAK	
11:30	12:00	Continue to the Identity (role models, collage)	
12:00	13:00	Diversity iceberg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To examine "hidden" and "visible" identity characteristics To become aware of human identity as a complex phenomenon
13:00	14:00	LUNCH	
14:00	15:00	Clarifying Language Terminology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop common understanding of some terms To clarify any misunderstanding, misperceptions, or lack of information on the meaning of particular words
15:00	15:30	BREAK	
15:30	17:30	Rites of rituals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore both own social cultural religion identity and learn about others' through study of rites of passage
17:30	18:00	Life cards (delivery of the cards)	
18:00	18:30	Evaluation of the day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To evaluate training programme To assess participants learning and feelings

3rd day, Sunday May 8th

Start	End	Activity	Objective
9:00	9:30	Check in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To create a safe environment and build trust among the present To assess participants learning and feelings
9:30	11:00	Life cards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To gain a greater awareness of the myriad components that make up an individual's identity, of which being religious, having a specific sexual orientation, and gender each play a part, to varying degrees of significance, in most peoples' lives. To develop an appreciation for the variety of forms of religious/spiritual observance, sexual orientations, and ideas of gender To experiment with imagination and role play around the assembled person's identity, challenges faced and general life circumstances.
11:00	11:30	BREAK	
11:30	13:00	Back to the beginning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To raise awareness of the power of interpretation while highlighting the impact that the Creation Story has had on some cultural assumptions about gender roles
13:30	18:00	Cultural event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boat trip to the antique Sultaniye Roman thermal baths

4th day, Monday May 9th

Start	End	Activity	Objective
9:00	9:30	Check in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To create a safe environment and build trust among the present To assess participants learning and feelings
9:30	11:00	Maria's story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to engage participants in an exchange of perspectives and values on several difficult issues in inter-religious/cultural relations/sexual orientation, without personalizing the debate. to reflect on their own process of dialogue within the activity, informing the eventual creation of some guidelines for interfaith dialogue that includes the topic of sexual orientation.
11:00	11:30	BREAK	
11:30	13:00	Cultural Rights and Human Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To become familiar with some key international human rights instruments To examine the interdependence of cultural rights with some other human rights To identify areas of conflict around cultural rights To better understand the complexity of some rights
13:00	14:00	LUNCH	
14:00	15:00	Here I Stand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To create an opportunity to reflect on difficult questions and to allow participants to reveal their perspectives in a safe way, and to explore different perspectives
15:00	16:30	Questions of Interpretation (silent discussion)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help people to distinguish between sometimes ambiguous boundaries between religion, interpretation and culture.
16:30	17:00	BREAK	
17:00	18:00	Four Quadrants (if not done Exploring Media Bias above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To learn how to analyse issues from different perspectives and to understand roles different parties can play
18:00	18:30	Evaluation of the day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To evaluate training programme To assess participants learning and feelings

5th day, Tuesday May 10th

Start	End	Activity	Objective
9:00	9:30	Check in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To create a safe environment and build trust among the present To assess participants learning and feelings
9:30	11:00	Solution focused Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To learn anew way to solve problems by asking questions that focus on the solution, not on the problem
11:00	11:30	BREAK	
11:30	13:00	Action plan	
13:00	14:30	Evaluation of the seminar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To evaluate the training programme
14:30		End of the seminar	

Participants List

No.	Name & Surname	M/F	Age	Country of Residence	Nationality	Organisation and Contact Details
1	Aslihan TEKIN	F	26-40	Belgium	Turkish	President, TR PLUS Centre for Turkey in Europe
2	Ayfer EREL	F	26-40	Turkey	Turkish	Vice president, efsat-Der. NGO which works on to help the people especially to migrant and asylum seeker to find a shelter
3	Aysen YAMAN	F	26-40	Turkey	Turkish	AK Parti (governing Party), local organisation in Köyceiz
4	Dudu LIMAN	F	41-55	Belgium	Turkish	President of Feminine Group, ASBL SYNERGIE PLUS
5	Esin PIRCI	F	41-55	Turkey	Turkish	Member and active in Women Commission, AK Parti (Governing Party), local organisation in Köyceiz
6	Fadime GOKTAS	F	26-40	Belgium	Belgium	Vice-President, ASBL SYNERGIE PLUS
7	Fatma Bostan ÜNSAL	F	41-55	Turkey	Turkish	Accountant, Capital City Women's Platform (CCWP)
8	Gülnur G. LENAY	F	41-55	Turkey	Turkish	Architect, Ministry of Environment and Forest, Köyceiz Bureau
9	Hidayet TUKSAL	F	41-55	Turkey	Turkish	Board member, The Capital City Women's Platform
10	Hülya ERTORUN	F	41-55	Belgium	Turkish	Honorary President "ASBL EATA (European Association of Turkish Academics)" and Project Coordinator "Bruxelles Laïque"
11	Humeyra OZCAN	F	18-25	Belgium	Belgian (Turkish origin)	Student- Master in Law, Haute école Lucia De Brouckère
12	Imran YIGIT	F	26-40	Belgium	Belgian (Turkish origin)	Volunteer, Aisbl European Muslim Network,
13	Leyla ERTORUN	F	26-40	Belgium	Belgian (Turkish origin)	Founder of ASBL "La Voix des Femmes" and "EATA-European Association of Turkish Academics", Brussels- St-Josse, Volunteer in MRAX (Mouvement contre le Racisme, l'Antisémitisme et la Xénophobie)
14	Muserref YARDIM	F	26-40	Belgium	Turkish	Researcher in the topic "Citoyenneté Féminine Spirituelle "
15	Nermin TOPCU	F	41-55	Turkey	Turkish	Pharmacist, owns a pharmacy shop
16	Nesrin SEMİZ	F	41-55	Turkey	Turkish	President, Capital City Women's Platform (CCWP)
17	Özgül OKLU	F	26-40	Turkey	Turkish	Secretary of the local governer, Koycegiz local government
18	Sevil GOKTAS	F	26-40	Belgium	Belgian (Turkish origin)	Treasurer, ASBL SYNERGIE PLUS
19	Tuba ER	F	26-40	Turkey	Turkish	A Member of Administrative Board, Capital City Women's Platform
20	Tuba YARDIM	F	26-40	Belgium	Belgian (Turkish origin)	Student- Master in Theology, Catholic University of Leuven



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