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VALORISATION SHORT SUMMARY Belgium

Introduction

- **The objective of the project**
 - Raising awareness among workers and managers on the issue of women homelessness
 - Understanding trauma and its impacts on both victims and workers.
 - Addressing the Importance of the Influence of the Host Environment
 - Opening a Reflection on Solutions

Considering local reality (National Action Plan to combat all forms of Gender-Based Violence 2015-2019) we knew that participants were already sensitized on GBV, so we did not develop this topic but it remained our common thread. We have linked gender violence, trauma and women homelessness throughout the training.

- **findings from our national gap analysis report.**

In the national report, it appeared that:

For service users:

- Women do not feel they have a say in determining what they are working in the service.
- Women felt that staff provided information that allowed them to understand trauma and coping skills, but this could be improved, particularly with regard to the impact of violence on themselves and on their relationships.
- They expressed the fact that they did not have the opportunity to connect with other service users to obtain or provide assistance.
- Although generally satisfied with the support of staff, some women felt that staff did not sufficiently understand their financial, physical and psychological problems, their history of violence or for some of their experiences as a migrant woman.
- Women are mainly satisfied with the support given to their children. However, once they leave the shelter, they continue to need parenting support. They therefore believe that support on parenting would be interesting.



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As far as staff are concerned:

The gaps identified mainly include :

- Need to have recognition of the impacts of work on them and their well-being,
- Lack of adequate workspace for workers and beneficiaries (environment).
- Lack of structural moments and spaces to discuss their work and prevent impacts (supervisions, meetings, interviews ...)

Recommendations included:

- Deepen trauma training
- Managers' awareness of the reality of the field,
- appropriate support from management and subsidiary authorities
- ...

- **How the trainings were designed to address these gaps. (Content, length, types, attendants,):**

The training was adapted to the three groups of participants: **front-line staff, internal workers** at the CVFE and **managers**.

The training framework was:

- Definition of homelessness (with Feantsa Typologies)
- Definitions GBV
- Attachment Theory
- Trauma (Symptoms, Impacts, ...)
- Key elements of PIE

The training took place over one day except the in-house training, which was done over 2 days. We decided to adjust the time because in previous training sessions, the participants had sent back to us the fact that it was intense on a short time. In addition to this, workers expressed the need to go deeper into certain points during the first day of training.

For all the trainings, we took the time to reflect on the key element: "**Client involvement/Managing relationships**" by focusing on the 5 core values (**Empowerment Safety, trustworthiness, Choice, Collaboration**). For that, we invited workers to answer a few questions by targeting service users. For managers, the questions were mainly focused on workers.

For managers, we began the training by a reminder on the homeless and VBG points. With them, we emphasized certain points such as the environment (security, social spaces, ...) and the impacts on workers and the various solutions to consider.

We wanted this training to reflect the PIE values, so we listened to the participants, we chose a welcoming and warm training place. We have inserted videos, images, to illustrate what we



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say or to make transitions between different themes.

- **The procedure of the interviews and the valorisation session**

At each end of the training, we asked the participants to give us feedback on the day. We also announced that we were probably going to send them a valorisation survey. When we received the valorisation survey, we emailed it to all the trained people, except the managers. It took a long time to get the answers. We had planned an internal focus group that could not take place due to lack of time.

- **The findings**

! The answers that appeared more than once are **bold**

Question 1

What kinds of changes (awareness, understanding, practice, management) have you experienced in your work related to the topics of training?

- **Landscaping the places of life (Kitchen, Dining Room, Children's Space)**
- **Colleagues' awareness of PIE concept**
- **Best understanding of trauma concept**
- Awareness of the dimension of vicarious trauma
- Awareness of the importance of the environment and the care of women and the means to preserve oneself as a stakeholder.
- Increased awareness of the reality of women in precarious situations
- Special attention to the question of choice
- Installation of a suggestion box
- Respect your own pace of work and give yourself comfort

Question 2

Which of these changes has had the biggest impact on you in your work?

- **Awareness of the reality of precarious women and better understanding of trauma**
- **Importance given to the needs of staff**
- Allowing time and space appointments to be tuned
- Practical changes in the organization of the house and collective participation (service users involved)
- Storage, cleaning and deco layout of workspaces



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Question 3

What consequences may the training have on the circumstances of women using your services?

- **Comprehensive care** and an open mind in psychosocial work
- **Better reception, more attention**, more empathy, more kindness, more understanding on the life course, relation of equal to equal
- **Improvement of the physical environment** (security, feeling of being at home, decoration, comfort of rooms)
- Avoiding eviction of undocumented and homeless women
- Promote autonomy, more responsibilities

Question 4

What changes have occurred in connection with the training that effect the way you connect to service users?

- **Taking care of the reception**, the follow-up of and the link with women and their children
- Better orientation to existing resources
- Make women actresses (competence, appreciation of experience)
- Consideration of the impacts of trauma
- Questioning the Rules and its implementation
- Strengthening pair support

Question 5

What changes have occurred in connection with the training that effect the way you and your colleagues work together as a team?

- **Attention to the needs of others**
- Humor, mutual aid, better communication among colleagues
- More communication on follow-ups of situations
- Talking about important or difficult events
- **Sharing a common language about precariousness and trauma**
- Avoiding overcrowding in Rooms
- Avoiding retraumatization
- Thinking about how to Improve spaces like rooms

Question 6

What change has occurred in your workplace that effects how the members of your team handle difficult situations?

- Need more time and to assess those change



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- Avoid working alone when there is a situation that resonates with the worker.
- Taking into account issues related to trauma and attachment
- The importance of caring relations (keep in touch with women)

Question 7

What other changes do you consider necessary for more positive effects? (on women, on your work, on your service)

- PIE training for all staff, for the Management
- Psychological support for Workers
- Great cleaning and renovation
- **Improvement of community living and offices.**
- Consistency in team decision
- Making clearer Framework for Women and Children
- More time for follow-up of women

Question 8

How can your management further support a trauma informed environment ?

- Paying close attention to the **development of the shelter**
- by providing the opportunity to **provide ongoing training** to workers (trauma-appropriate tools, conflict management) for this specific audience
- by setting up supervisions or other moments in order to meet as a team (outside the shelter) and open to a reflection on our work through a step back (reflexive practice?)
- by thinking about the means available to workers to welcome a woman victim of trauma and to improve comfort and well-being
- by setting up PIE training or awareness for managers
- Looking for solutions and support by increasing the safety of the premises

Question 9

What topics do you think are important that were not covered in the training?

- Important topics were discussed but in a short time.
- I would have preferred to take **the time to deepen** into certain points (Safety of the Place, Trauma, Reflexive Practice)
- Funding

Question10

What is your understanding of Complex Trauma?

- Much better, it takes into account the history of the individual in his attachment
- It is a set of traumatic events that repeat and endure.
- Complex trauma causes psychological and emotional problems.



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- A good understanding that makes us more attentive and allows a global look.
- Need to deepen

Question 11

How would you rate your ability to identify signs of trauma in women who you work with now?

Between **good** and sufficient

Only one person answered Very good

Question 12

Can you give an example of the sign of the Vicarious Trauma, and what would you do to respond to it?

- Feeling of physical and psychological exhaustion
- Domestic violence experienced by a lady that would echo my own story
- Being traumatized by a story of a woman who recounts her rape

What to do :

- Seeking support in my work team and in my private life
- Ensure to remain realistic about what I can bring as help
- **Supervision**
- **Ongoing training**
- Temporary work Stoppage and Psychological Follow-up
- Rest
- **Speaking space**
- EMDR

Question 13

What changes or resources would help you to prevent Vicarious Trauma?

- Management Support
- Supervisions
- Intervision
- Team speech space
- Tools to Deal with traumatized people

How useful do you think this training was on a scale from 1 till 10?

- One 6
- One 9
- others gave **8**



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- **Summary**

Comparing the responses with the results of our national gap analysis, we note that the training was satisfactory for all participants. It helped to enlighten the workers. Training encompasses the reality of VBG, trauma and homelessness. It is a training that takes into account the reality of the workers, the impact of people's experiences on them. It raises management awareness and provides leads for workers to bring about changes at their level.

In this survey, we found that most workers have implemented some changes in their work or their work environment. Others questioned the internal regulations of their establishment. They tried to sensitize their colleagues and were very motivated.

This tells us that regular reminders on these topics could bring significant changes on awareness but also on the interest in improving relationships, environment, care and self-care

... .

Moreover, it appears that even if the level of satisfaction is high, workers remain waiting for training that would allow them to master the different concepts. There is a kind of frustration about the time allocated to this training and therefore a need to have more time. As trainers ourselves, we announced it as an "Introduction to the PIE" because the topics were addressed succinctly and informatively. A few points have been given priority, but all the themes should be dealt with in depth.

Although all have knowledge about GBV and trauma, few make the connection in their practice. There is information and then there is a lack of practice and common language that could facilitate the implementation of the various interventions.

This training allowed participants to become aware that the environment is making an important contribution to the process of change. The training also reinforced the idea that taking care of oneself was important.

Based on the feedback of people after each training, we find it relevant that this training takes place on different times:

- 1: Female homelessness, gender-based violence (Recall or awareness, local and European law)
- 2: Human Functioning: Attachment Theory and Traumatic Memory
- 3: Key Elements of the PIE

This distinction is necessary because one cannot make the economy of a good understanding of certain notions, especially that of trauma. In the context of homelessness, and hosting environments, the risk of retraumatizing people is very high. Enabling responders to understand the mechanisms of trauma and how to deal with it or how to help people cope with it is paramount.

As for vicarious trauma, most of people trained mentioned a high rate of absenteeism in the various associations. They talked about a real impact of the workload, the political reality that



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affects associations and creates a very stressful environment but also the lack of space to talk about the difficulties or sufferings associated with work.