



## MESSAGE

The project *Breaking the Cycle of Violence* is co-financed by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme of the European Union and builds on a previous project *Full Cooperation: Zero Violence* with the same theme. The project is aimed to complement Malta's plan of action to implement the Istanbul Convention, with the objective to raise awareness among victims of domestic violence as well as potential victims, with a particular focus on women with disabilities, LGBTI women and migrant women.

The identified objectives of this project were: 1) to carry out research in order to identify behaviours of target groups which need to be changed in order to break the cycle of violence; 2) to develop and implement an educational programme for children and young adults; 3) to raise awareness among the different target groups on violence prevention, victims' rights and support services available to them; and 4) to develop and implement mentoring workshops for victims of violence in a second stage shelter and female survivors who receive support services from the national agency.

These training packs are aimed to ensure the sustainability of the project and may thus be replicated. They include an outline and resources for eight mentoring workshops – which tackle topics such as self-awareness, communication and empowerment amongst others – and two one-to-one sessions. They also include recommendations based on an ongoing evaluation of the sessions themselves.

Despite the success in these sessions, they should not be viewed from a one-size-fits-all perspective. This project in fact tried to shift away from this approach by addressing the different needs of the different target groups identified for this project. Therefore, these training packs shall act as a guidance and may be tailored to suit the needs of a different audience.

Finally, let's hope that this training pack will serve as a practical tool that will break the cycle of violence.

**Commissioner on Gender-based Violence and Domestic Violence**

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# 1 Introduction

The Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) is committed to rendering Maltese society an inclusive one, in a way that persons with disability reach their full potential in all aspects of life, enjoying a high quality of life thanks to equal opportunities.

In fulfilling this mission, CRPD works in order to eliminate any form of direct or indirect social discrimination against persons with disability and their families while providing them with the necessary assistance and support.

## 2 Objectives

The course consists of four (4) training sessions with a duration of 3 hours each.

The main aim of the training course is to increase awareness of domestic violence among the disabled women participating in the sessions. Mainly the course explained what domestic violence is, how to recognise abusive relationships, and where one can seek assistance.

The training course was developed on the following underlying principles:

- Creating an inclusive environment where each participant's impairment-related need is taken into consideration; so that every person in the group can actively participate in the discussions and group work,
- Creating an environment where participants feel safe, a place where they can get to know the other participants, share their thoughts and experiences and therefore learn from each other's contribution to the group.

## 3 Logistics

### 3.1 Advertising the training course

The training was advertised in different media, so that the message could reach as many persons with different impairments as possible. The advert was disseminated in email format (to persons registered as disabled with CRPD) and it was also uploaded on CRPD's page on Facebook. The advert was disseminated in both English and Maltese languages. Those interested could register through a Google form which requested their contact details. They were also asked to mark any additional support they required. You can see an example of a registration form here.

### 3.2 Training venue

The venue where the training course took place, was in compliance with the Access for All Design Guidelines. In particular, the entrance, the passengers lift, sanitary facilities, the pathway leading to the training room, and the training room itself were all physically accessible for all. Link to Guidelines on CRPD website.

### 3.3 Reserved parking for blue badge holders

The venue also included a garage where any training participants who had a blue badge, could park their car inside the garage and have direct access to the training room.

### 3.4 Transport for disabled persons requiring it

Not all disabled persons can make use of a personal car to travel from one place to another. And not all disabled persons are able to make use of public transport. Therefore, individualized transport was provided to ensure that everyone had the real possibility of attending for this training course. Some of the participants could use regular vehicles e.g. persons with visual impairment, whereas other needed vehicles equipped with tail lifts e.g. wheelchair users or persons who use crutches. Transport was required to pick up and return participants to their home/work address.

### 3.5 Sign language interpretation

Sign language interpretation in Maltese was provided to the participants requesting it. This means that the interpreter was interpreting what was being said (by trainers and other

participants) into Maltese Sign Language and vice-versa, therefore interpreting the signs made by the Deaf participant into spoken Maltese.

### 3.6 Requesting material in alternative formats

Persons registering for the training course could mark if they required material in alternative formats such as requesting that training material is sent to them in electronic format or printed in braille.

### 3.7 Other support required

Persons registering for the training course could list down any other requirements they needed to be able to attend the sessions. CRPD would then consider the requests made on the basis of whether it is reasonable or not.

The trainers contacted the applicants by phone, by email or in a face-to-face meeting, to explain what the training course, including the individual tutorial and the participation in the seminar would entail. An email message with all the details including dates on which sessions would be taking place was sent to all persons enrolled for the course.

Participants in employment were given the possibility of requesting that CRPD contacts their employer to request that they are excused from work while attending the training course. Since the training course was spread over 4 sessions (and an individual tutorial) taking place during the morning, and in light of the fact that a number of disabled persons are not in full time employment, it would have been difficult for some participants to utilize their vacation leave to attend the training course.

The trainers liaised with social workers of some of the participants attending the training, so that together they could make the necessary preparations for the participant to benefit from the training course as much as possible.

## 4 Creating an Inclusive Environment

In order to create a safe environment for the participants, the following was taken into consideration:

- Privacy at the venue where the training was delivered: as much as possible see that there are no distractions or interruptions by persons who are not participating in the group.
- All participants and trainers were women. Given that domestic violence is mostly perpetrated by men, the fact that all participants and trainers were women is believed to have contributed towards creating an environment of trust where the participants felt more comfortable in sharing their personal opinions and experiences.
- Preparations for coffee breaks were done in a separate room to avoid having other people interfering with the training sessions.
- Participants were given ground rules to abide to. The trainers explained how abiding to the ground rules will have an impact on the success of the training course.
- The sessions were planned in a way to end 10 mins earlier than scheduled – this allowed participants some time to speak to one of the trainers if they needed to say something they could not share in the group with the trainer having the possibility of guiding the participants towards contacting the appropriate service e.g. telling the participant to contact her social worker about the problem mentioned.
- The delivery of the training course was not publicised in any form of media. This was done to protect the privacy of the participants, so that no one would know why participants were visiting the venue and that training concerning domestic violence was taking place. This is also believed to have helped the participants feel safer in attending the training sessions.

## 5 Sessions

### 5.1 Session 1

The first session involved a number of activities which allowed the participants to get to know each other and to discuss ‘domestic violence’ – what they think domestic violence is and what it means to them. What follows is a run through the powerpoint presentations used in the training sessions.

- **Slide 1-2:** Name of project, number of session and name of trainers.
- **Slides 3-7:** The ground rules shared with the training participants together some details on the training course.
- **Slide 8 - Ice-breaking session:** Introduction of participants, where each person was encouraged to introduce herself by saying her name, share something that about herself (which could be anything the participants decides such as her hobbies, her pets, anything she likes doing etc), why they were interested in enrolling in this course and one thing they wanted to achieve from this course.
- **Slide 9- Activity 1:** Think: What men and women are naturally good at? In this exercise, participants are encouraged to share with the whole group what they think men and women are naturally good at. The aim behind this exercise is to pinpoint how traditionally men are associated with work being more powerful and being engaged in paid work outside of the house and women are associated with a more caring role, being perceived as weaker than men and are responsible for working inside the house with no paid wage. Emphasis is made on how these stereotypes are socially constructed. It is not true that men and women are naturally born good at these roles, but it is society that expects them to be confined to the respective gender roles.
- **Slide 10 – Activity 2:** Participants were split into smaller groups and asked to discuss what they understand with the term violence against women. They were told that after this exercise, they would also discuss the points presented by each group. The trainers had grouped the participants in advance of the session in a way that each group would include participants with different impairments and that someone in each group would be able to jot down notes. However, the participants were not aware of this. Each group had to agree on who would be taking notes and who would be presenting them to the whole group during the plenary session.



- **Slide 11:** Following the plenary session, the trainers mentioned the different types of violence that can constitute domestic violence including emotional abuse, financial, psychological abuse, sexual abuse and physical abuse. The trainers explained that these types of violence will be discussed in more detail in the second session.
- **Slide 12:** The trainers went through the list of services that persons who are experiencing violence can approach for assistance.

## 5.2 Session 2

- **Slide 1 – 2:** Cover pages.
- **Slide 3:** Recapitulation of what was said in the first session including the most important ground rules and an overview of the main activities carried out in session 1.
- **Slide 4 – Activity 1:** Group discussion - What men/women are naturally good at? Re-opened the discussion on the points mentioned in session 1. In summary, the group agreed that men naturally have more physical strength than women, can perform better in sports and are better decision-makers. On the other hand, the group thought that women are naturally better at cleaning, cooking and caring for others. The trainers highlighted that men are mostly involved in activities outside the home environment and therefore are more likely to socialize whilst women are more involved in activities inside the home which are not remunerated. Men are more likely to have better support networks whilst women are more restricted to widen their network of support since they are more closed into the home environment.
- **Slide 5:** The group proceeded to discuss how stereotypical beliefs impact on disabled women. Society tends to give less power to women in general and even less to women who have a disability. In general, society does not take into consideration holistic accessibility measures that would make services accessible for disabled people. (Link to Rights, not Charity Manual).
- **Slide 6 – 10:** The trainers discussed the importance of self-awareness in order to better understand both areas of strength in the Self and also other limitations which may render the person more vulnerable to abuse. Self-awareness helps a person feel more equipped to understand and accept her holistic being. As a result, the person will be more prepared to work on herself in order to accept and love herself better. ‘Accepting the real ME gives me more skills to feel more empowered to identify any abusive

behavior towards me'. No one is fully-independent. The more awareness of Self, the more awareness of the level of independence a person has. Thus, the more control I can exert on my decisions.

- **Slide 11:** A brief overview of the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act and also the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability was shared with the participants. The participants learnt about their legal rights and also where to contact if being discriminated against.
- **Slide 12:** The participants were reminded about the services available to persons who are experiencing domestic violence.
- **Slide 13 – 14:** Read out the definition of Domestic Violence as per Domestic Violence Act (Chapter 481). Pointed that domestic violence is socially–constructed in the sense that up to a number of years, the behavior was acceptable.
- **Slides 15 – 21 – Activity 2:** The group discussed how domestic violence comprises different forms, that is; physical, sexual, psychological, financial and emotional. Spiritual abuse was also mentioned during the discussion. Each form of violence was discussed and explained in details with the participants.
- **Slides 22 – 25:** Domestic violence is all about power and control. The main aim of the perpetrator is to shatter the inner being of the person with the intention of manipulating the mindset of the person experiencing domestic violence.
- **Slide 26 – 28:** In the first session, the trainers had explained that each session would be built on the feedback gained during each and every session. They referred to the discussion held in the first session where the participants were asked why they decided to attend for this training course. Most of them spoke about the issue of vulnerability of this aspect together with the importance of Self Awareness and Assertiveness as important tools to respect and safeguard the Self from abuse.
- **Slides 29 – 30 – Activity 3:** Video clip – The true experience of Leslie Morgan Steiner who explained why victims of domestic violence do not leave the relationship with their abuser. (Link to clip on YouTube). The participants watched the clip (in English) and after the trainers read out the translation in Maltese so that all participants could understand what was said in the clip. A discussion followed.

### 5.3 Session 3

The participants attended a Self-Defence session with a martial arts trainer who was qualified to work with disabled persons and who therefore had the knowledge and practice to adapt the session to the participants' individual needs.

It is important to note that this Self-Defence session was not presented as a solution that would bring an end to domestic violence. It should never be the responsibility of the survivor to stop the abuse. The aim of this session was to assist participants in facing any prejudices they might have against themselves. The instructor, together with his team adapted different exercises and moves to each individual's impairment. The feedback gained at the end of the session was very positive. There was general consensus that this session helped them to overcome their own limitations by realizing that they can still participate in such activities notwithstanding their biological impairment. The session also helped the group to bond with each other.

### 5.4 Session 4

- **Slide 1-2:** Cover pages
- **Slide 3:** Recapitulation from the session no. 2 including set ground rules and the importance of Self-Awareness together with knowing one's legal rights and the services available for people needing assistance with regards to domestic violence.
- **Slide 4:** Recapitulation of the different forms of abuse
- **Slide 5 – Activity 1:** A representative of the Investigations Unit (CRPD) explained how the unit works to resolve cases of discrimination against persons on the basis of their disability, in the areas of Education, Employment, Health, Insurance, Access to Goods and Services, Accessibility, Housing as well as those falling within the Bill of Rights (as per Chapter 413 of the Laws of Malta). Another representative of CRPD explained what the UNCRPD is and how it safeguards the rights of disabled people. The participants had the opportunity to ask questions about the EOA and the UNCRPD.
- **Slide 6 – Activity 2:** The Mask You Live In – Trailer. The trainers reminded the participants about the exercise carried out in the first session and the discussion on how gender roles are socially constructed and based on stereotypes. The group watched the trailer of the film 'The Mask You Live In' which deals with how masculinity is defined and the harm this can cause to boys. The trainers then read out the translation of the clip in Maltese. The group proceeded to discuss their views on how masculinity is defined.

- **Slide 7 – Activity 3:** Talk by representatives of St Jeanne Antide SOAR (NGO). The representatives talked about how this NGO is involved with survivors of domestic violence. A story-telling session followed with the main points of the session being the grooming that takes place at the beginning of a relationship, how the person undergoing the abuse does not recognize the signs of control and abuse, how the perpetrator gradually nullifies the person's network of support, and how often domestic violence is confined to the home and is not visible to persons outside.
- **Slide 8 – 9:** The participants evaluated the training course. They were free to share what they learnt from the course, and also what recommendations they had for the future. The participants agreed that there should be more opportunities for them where to discuss topics can that impact their life as disabled people.
- **Slide 10:** Participants were reminded about the individual session that would be taking place in the coming months and where they would have the opportunity to clarify any issues tackled in the training course on a one-to-one basis with the trainers.
- **Slide 11:** In connection with the discussion on Self-Awareness and acceptance, each participant was given a ceramic bowl to remind them that just like the bowl, each person is beautiful but also fragile and that is why it is important to accept and look after oneself.
- **Slide 12:** Filling in of evaluation sheet.

## **6 One-to-one sessions**

Each participant had to attend for a 2-hour individual tutorial with one of the trainers to discuss the sessions. The individual tutorial was of particular help to the Deaf participant and other trainees with intellectual impairment. Most of the other trainees felt that it should not have been compulsory to attend the session.

## 7 Observations and Recommendations

### 7.1 Important notes for trainers to keep in mind

- Speak slowly to give time for the sign language interpreter to interpret the information
- Pictures shown on power point presentation should be described, mainly for the benefit of trainees with visual impairment
- During the sessions, a CRPD officer was providing support to individuals or small group of participants – to explain particular words or concepts.
- Videos in English were played during the sessions – each clip was translated into Maltese. After the clip, one of the trainers read out the translation in Maltese so that everyone could understand what was said in the clip. This also encouraged discussion in the group.
- Pictures on power point presentations included captions with an explanation of what the picture is about.

### 7.2 Evaluation of the training course delivered

Evaluation of the training sessions: Feedback was gathered at the end of every session. As explained above, the trainers were preparing consecutive sessions based on the feedback gathered in the previous session. Participants were asked to fill in an evaluation sheet at the end of the fourth session.

They were free to write their name or not. The evaluation sheet was easy and simple to fill in so that everyone could fill it in as independently as possible. Participants with visual impairment had the possibility to either being assisted by someone of their choice or else have the evaluation sheet emailed to them so they could fill it in themselves, later.

The feedback gained was very positive with session no. 3 being one of the favourite sessions and a number of participants saying that more training and discussion opportunities should be provided.

### 7.3 Feedback from the trainers

- Issues with transport and punctuality
- Participants would have had more time for discussion if the group was smaller

- More sessions would have given the possibility for trainers and participants to discuss in further detail, however more sessions would have made it difficult for those in employment to attend.
- Meetings with other project partners at the planning stage to ensure that participants can learn about domestic violence in other cultures and between same-sex relationships.

## **8 Resources**

1. Link 1
2. Link 2
3. Link 4