

# SYMBIOSIS

## Addressing Sexual Violence Against Refugee Women (ASVARW)

JUST/2015/RDAP/AG/VICT/9328

### Symmary Community Meetings Report

<b>Dates:</b> 1 November 2017, 07 December 2017, 11 January 2018, 12 January 2018, 09 February 2018, 12 February 2018, 1 March 2018 and 5 March 2018
<b>Places:</b> Dendropotamos Roma Women Center, Thessaloniki, Scientific Society of Child and Adolescent Care (SY.ME.P.E.), Center for Counseling and Psychological Support, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Municipality of Thessaloniki, "Water Room" ( <i>Aithousa Nerou</i> ), University of Macedonia (Pa.Mak.), Thessaloniki
<b>Participants:</b> 95 female and 6 male participants from NGOs as well as local authorities, Municipality of Thessaloniki as well as the Municipality of Thermi.
<b>Community Meeting Coordinator:</b> Despina Syrri
<b>Duration of each community meeting was:</b> 3 hours

### Topics

The objective was to organize an open and general discussion and to inform women about their rights and the response to SGBV in case where they may have been survivors of SGBV themselves. Topics included the concepts and types of SGBV; the main aspects and symptoms of SGBV; signs of SGBV; response to SGBV; and information for survivors of SGBV such as accessing medical treatment, reporting to the police, getting psychosocial support and information about networks, shelters and counselling centers in the city of Thessaloniki for survivors of SGBV. Last, it was identified that some of the participants have been survivors of forced marriages which is a cultural norm among the community and this topic was more extensively discussed. In some of the meetings, there was a need to organise a more general discussion about the SGBV phenomenon providing participants with basic information, with a focus on aid mechanisms and organisations. In this respect, topics covered included:

- The concepts and types of SGBV.
- The main aspects and dimensions of the phenomenon.
- Signs and symptoms of SGBV.
- Statistics about SGBV at national and international level.
- The current situation of the reception and accommodation of refugees in Greece.



Addressing Sexual Violence Against Refugee Women

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- Information for victims/survivors of SGBV (rape, sexual assault, etc.), such as advice on reporting the crime to the police, accessing medical treatment, getting further psychosocial support and appropriate referrals to counselling centres and hostels, etc.

During the community meetings with participants coming from the Municipalities the main topic of discussion was the SGBV phenomenon: concepts and types, the dimensions and the symptoms located in the Greek context, as also experiences of the participants and information for victims/survivors of SGBV. Moreover, during the meeting participants raised their lack of familiarity in general with the refugee and migration issue, the current situation in the refugee camps, main forms of SGBV located, etc. Therefore, part of the meeting was transformed into a small seminar on the current state regarding the accommodation of refugees in Greece as well as the profile of the refugee population in Greece.

## **Methodology**

The method used for the community meeting was the one of 'Workshop/Focus Group Discussion (FGD)'. This method was chosen because it allows participants to discuss their ideas in an open and relaxed atmosphere. As workshops and FGDs can take a variety of formats, this meeting was designed in the frame of an FGD to specifically concentrate on the issue of SGBV as it is experienced by the community and allowed the space for the participants to be open and focus more on the issues that the community faces and also bring up personal experiences. This was handled by the Coordinator in a positive manner with careful respect to the community's cultural norms while at the same time enabling the participants to understand what constitutes SGBV.

## **Involvement**

It is important to mention that the afore mentioned topics, although they were prepared by us in order to be presented, they were also brought up by the participants during the discussions which shows the need of the participants to receive this information. This also made the participants to raise questions and actively participate in the discussion, mentioning how necessary it is to know this topics/information in their community. All the participants got actively involved in the discussion demonstrating special interest about the phenomenon of SGBV, mechanisms and organisations providing support and protection to victims, as well as about the extent this is a widespread phenomenon. However, it seems that the participants would like to have more information on issues like what opportunities are available to them in order to assist victims of SGBV through voluntary work, how to better deal with stereotypes and prejudices about gender and how to respond if and when they come across specific cases of SGBV like domestic violence.

## **Impact**

The participants acquired crucial information about SGBV issues and the impact of the Community Meeting is expected to be highly positive. The participants learned how to identify SGBV incidents and how to ask for help from the appropriate agencies. Moreover, the purpose of the Community Meeting was to have the participants act as antennas of disseminating the information and knowledge acquired among the ROMA community, which is expected to multiply the impact among the wider ROMA community.

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## **Communication of necessary information**

Communication of necessary information is shared between participants through information material from the Coordinator of the Community Meeting. The Coordinator shared also the brochure with information about SGBV and the relevant agencies in the city of Thessaloniki which was created in the context of this project.