The project is co-founded by the European Union

Project GROW - Development of woman self-help group in the area of multifunctional farming

Evaluation of prepared programs and methodology

(Intellectual output 4)

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1) INTRODUCTION

In the GROW project we prepared evaluation of:
- Methodologies that were used for identification competences acquired in formal, non-formal and informal education and
- Evaluation implemented training programs.

Aim of preparation of evaluation:
- To find out deficiencies of prepared programs and methodologies during the project implementation;
- To supplement the programs and methodology.

2) EVALUATION OF METHODOLOGIES THAT WERE USED FOR IDENTIFICATION OF COMPETENCES ACQUIRED IN FORMAL, NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION

Evaluation methodology

Evaluation was prepared on the basis of experiences, which were gained at implementation of methodologies for identification of competences acquired in formal, non-formal and informal education. In the GROW project were prepared the methodologies for identification of competences for:
a) Entrepreneurship,
b) Horticulture,
c) Social services,
d) Group work,

These methodologies were implemented by a group of mentors, which were trained for this task. After implementation if methodologies each group of mentors had a meeting in order to identify:
- Time, that is needed for implementation;
- Understandability and adequacy of prepared of questions;
- Possible bottlenecks in implementation,
- Impressions /reactions of candidates,
- Impressions and results of single candidate (woman). This activity is useful because the impressions are still fresh and decisions about each trainee are easier.

Results of evaluation

a) Entrepreneurship

We measured competences for entrepreneurship with the use of questionnaire, which contains a number of statements in relation to entrepreneurship. For each statement candidate indicates the extent it relates to him. Method of implementation of questionnaire:

group interview. Interviewees responded to this questionnaire in 15 – 20 minutes. A lot of candidates demonstrated a great tendency for "adaptation" of responses in order to present them in a "better light" (as more experienced entrepreneurs). This most probably happened due to selection process.

In order to alleviate these tendencies we recommend to change a little bit the instructions candidates and to modify the order of questions. Perhaps in this way it would be a little bit more difficult for candidates to "adapt" responses.

b) Horticulture

Competences for horticulture were measured with situation play test; it consists of open questions and pictures, which are connected with the horticulture. It is recommended that this test implemented by mentors/persons with the knowledge in the area of agriculture. The test was implemented with the use of individual interview technique. Each interview lasted app. 10 minutes. Questions were understandable. Actually all of the women had a lot of experiences in the area of horticulture and liked this kind of questions.

c) Socialservices

In order to identify competences for social services we have a prepared couple of open questions (what would you do if…) which relate to social sensitivity (which is necessary when working with/for people). This type of questions is known also as "in basket". For each questions candidates spent 2-3 minutes. In a lot of cases were noticed really big differences among answers of candidates: from the very schematic ones till the surprising ones.

These questions can be also implemented as role play in which are included 2 persons. Duration of each role play: 3 - 5 minutes. When the role play finish it is recommended that players (candidates) discuss about their fillings / impressions about the play. In this way we get additional information about trainees (communication skills, responsibility…). Taking into consideration "additional" time for discussion the duration of each role play is app. 10 minutes.

At the end of the role play mentor should evaluate behaviour of persons, which are included in the role play. To this purpose it was prepared a rating form. Instead of using rating scales we recommend to identify most distinctive traits that each candidate demonstrated during the role play. Reasons for this are the following:
- It is difficult to rate all of the items, because the role play is short.
- On the other side it is more easy to recognize more distinct / strong traits, that are demonstrated during the play (i.e the trainee found a lot of solutions, or she is passive, or she is persistent, she talks a lot…). These findings can be also useful at planning further work with trainees.

d) Group work

To identify competences for group work we used "airplane test" in which all candidates form groups of max. 4 people and each group have to prepare "the best" paper airplane. To identify the best group we have fixed the following criteria:
- Which group is fastest at preparation of the plane;

- Which airplane stays longer in the air.

Both criteria were of the same importance. For evaluation of behaviour of single trainees in the group we have used the same template as was used for role play. We have find out the following:
- Some women in the group demonstrated more initiative, some have tried to find common solutions;
- In a lot of cases each woman preferred to make their own plane by themselves (not thinking and working together other women) and then women selected the plane which was the best;
- Groups should have at least 3 members, otherwise the group work is less "demonstrated";

When all interviews are finished it is recommended that mentors take additional time to discuss impressions and results of single woman. This activity is useful because the impressions are still fresh and decisions about each trainee are easier.

With a view to check the "validity" of responses of candidates, we have prepared a ***questionnaire for the collection of historical data of each candidate*** (anamnesis). This questionnaire comprehends questions on:
- General information on candidate (name, address…);
- Professional, non – formal and informal working experiences of the candidate in relation to the areas in which we have measured competencies;
- Formal, non – formal and informal knowledge of candidate (in the areas of our **interest);**
- Motivation to join trainings and to collaborate with other group members;
- Possession of land and tools for horticulture (it was not a prerequisite for selection of candidate).

Responses of candidates in "anamnesis questionnaire can give useful facts on:
- Life experiences in the area of entrepreneurship, organization of events, collaboration in local community;
- Practical experiences and knowledge in the area of horticulture;
- Experiences of candidate in social care: i.e. work with children, older people… these experiences cam be acquired in family, helping friends…

3) EVALUATION OF IMPLEMENTED TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Evaluation methodology

Evaluation of training programmes was prepared on the basis of results of implemented training activities, which were carried out in each participating country.

Evaluation of prepared training programs based on:
- Observations of trainers who carried out trainings of target groups.During training implementation in each participating country trainers had several meetings. On the meetings was discussed training progress in each workshop, wishes and initiatives of trainees and obstacles (if they appeared).
- Assessments of trainees.
- Findings of multiplier event. At the end of project implementation was organized international conference for dissemination of intellectual outputs. Aim of the conference was (among other) to resent programmes and methodology which was prepared during the project and to evaluate prepared methodology in international context.

Results of evaluation

In this chapter are presented results of evaluation in each participating country.Firstly are presented results of trainees' evaluation and then the results of evaluation of the trainers; to these results we added also findings of multiplier event.

We implemented the same methodology for evaluation of findings in all participating countries and for all training programmes. In the horticulture area we have implemented also workshop for product preparation. In the area of entrepreneurship we have implemented also workshop for project preparation and management and workshop how to establish a social enterprise.

In order to get an overview of trainees' opinions on training programmes in the area of horticulture, self – help group and entrepreneurship we have summarized all of the answers with respect to each training area.

a) Horticulture

Evaluation of training programmes by trainees

A big majority of trainees liked very much training courses in the area of horticulture. They found courses interesting and useful. Majority of trainees indicated that this training programme completely fulfilled trainees' expectations.

Almost all of the ladies (trainees) were satisfied with the high quality of lectures and the preparedness of the lecturers. Contents were clearly presented and understandable.

For majority of trainees the most interesting and important topics of the horticulture training were:
- Presentation of plants which can be cultivated and processed at home (in small scale the gardens);
- Possibility for sharing experiences;
- Exchange of seedlings and seeds,
- Practical knowledge for using spices in the kitchen;
- Medicinal use of certain species (how to make a herbal tea, how to prepare a herbal soap…);
- Trainees learnt about the preparation of simple products that can be prepared at home.
- Excursion: on excursions trainees have seen in practise examples of topics that have been presented on workshops;
- Homework tasks: majority of participants have been very positive about the homework tasks; they found this task very interesting. This was also a strong community building element. In some cases homework stimulated phantasy and accelerated new ideas at trainees.

At the horticultural workshops participants missed the following:
- More practical work combined with lectures in order to consolidate acquired knowledge.
- Collecting of wild plants from their natural habitats and recognizing them.
- Presentation of specifics in small-scale cultivation and perspectives of family gardens. Large-scale (field) cultivation and processing proved to be less interesting for them.

Women were also faced with some difficulties. Workshops were organized a couple of times per week. On the workshops were also women with small children and school children and sometimes it was difficult to plan things at home in order to participate on workshop.

Evaluation of trainings by trainers

After trainings mentors were given special questionnaires with open-ended questions, which were prepared in the GROW project. Mentors have given answers that are presented in continuation.

Timeframe for implementation of workshops:
- Trainers had enough time to prepare learning material and to implement lessons.
- Practical exercises and work need more time for effective implementation.
- Trainers needed to be very flexible but concentrated in order to avoid running out of time.
- Trainees demonstrated very different interests for some topics (which couldn't be foreseen during the preparation for lectures); so trainers spent more time on the topics for which participants showed more interest.

Location of trainings:
- Natural environment (in which majority of trainings were carried out) provided excellent opportunities for practical work.
- For trainings were chosen such types of vegetables that in specific environmental conditions can be produced.

Conditions for practical work:
- At practical work, all of participants demonstrated great interest and enthusiasm and active participation. They were satisfied with the work carried out.
- Majority of participants had their own gardens at home, where they practiced what they learnt on workshops.
- In some training areas were established common training garden near the place of training. On these gardens trainees carried out practical exercises during trainings. On these gardens trainees followed the plant development from propagation to harvest.
- During training participants had opportunities to exchange seedlings and seeds.

Training methods:
- Lectures were carried out mainly in the classroom; trainers used a lot of illustration materials in order to make the theory more practical and more interesting.
- Practical work (that was organized by mentors) was varied and equipped with a lot of new information and explanations.
- During the practical work trainees were extremely efficient.
- The practical part of the training was realized mainly as home works. In many cases participants carried out the tasks (given by mentors) in small groups. Homework tasks were very useful for „group building" and for encouraging creativity.
- Trainees had possibilities to raise questions any time.

Responses of trainees:
- Almost all of trainees were motivated and enthusiastic during the whole course; they had a lot of questions and followed up the learning material continuously.
- Trainees were given contacts with various organizations to help them realize their ideas in the future.
- Some of trainees regretted that they didn't get accredited certificate at the end of the course.

Other issues:
- Some of the mentors pointed out that during trainings more time should be provided for field trips and farm visits in order to demonstrate to the trainees how the knowledge is utilized in real life. Examples of good practices also increase motivation of trainees to start up their own activity.
- Many mentors think that their role is to help at development and implementation of ideas of trainees. If trainees are satisfied we have confirmation that we have worked well.

b) Development of self – help group

<u>Evaluation of training programmes by trainees</u>

Majority of trainees liked training courses in the area of self – help group. Some of participants found workshops in the area of self-help group more useful and others less useful. Trainings fulfilled expectations of approximately half of trainees.

Majority of trainees were satisfied with the quality of lectures. More than half trainees indicated that contents were clearly presented and understandable.

For majority of trainees the most interesting and important topics of the self – help training were:
- Trainees were introduced with interesting and new techniques for knowing each other.
- During the training some of trainees succeeded to clarify their personal goals.
- Some of trainees succeeded to find common goal as a group and have prepared a network charter.

At the self – help workshops participants were faced with following challenges / difficulties:
- During the self – help workshop trainees were "directed" to teamwork, which is not always pleasant.
- It happened that group didn't get right motivation to work together. Sometimes trainees felt that it is difficult to create something together.
- There were some moments that group hasn't seen the "common point".
- If the whole group does not work on the same idea, it makes sense to seek opportunities to work in several groups.
- Some of the trainees needed more time to understand what it is expected from them.

<u>Evaluation of training programmes by trainers</u>

Trainers pointed out issues that are presented in continuation.

Timeframe for implementation of workshops:
- It was enough time for presentation of foreseen contents during the training.
- On the other side the "training time" was not sufficient for the formation of the group as a whole, because it is a process that requires a longer period. The group should be exposed to certain trials to learn from each other and identify what is common.
- Participants were offered the possibility for additional meetings in order to resolve individual issues work in a group.

Location of trainings:
- Some of training locations were outside centres/cities and because of this some participants had bigger travel costs. In these cases and if training is longer (several workshops), taking also into consideration that (some of) participants are without regular income, it is reasonably to think how can be (at least partially) covered travel expenses.
- Training locations outside centres / cities can also be the test of the actual motivation of trainees to work on a common business idea: if travel costs for participants represent "unbridgeable" obstacle this indicates that their interest for self-employment is probably not big enough.

Conditions for practical work:
- All of training rooms were equipped with necessary learning instruments. Rooms were big enough to be able to carry out work in pairs, smaller or bigger groups; tables and chairs can be moved.
- In most cases trainees had on their disposal computer, internet, blackboards and stand with leaves.

Training methods:
- Training methods in the program for the creation of self-help groups have been prepared in the manner that trainees would be active as much as possible: it was expected exchange between the trainees, teamwork, coordination of group and individual goals of trainees and preparation of collective "products" (which cannot be sufficiently prepared without the participation of the group).
- Creation of the group is a process that takes place gradually; single steps can left out (eg. knowledge and skills that a group owns, expectations and goals of the group as a whole, ways of cooperation of the group ....).
- Results of creation of self – help group are important for further training, particularly for entrepreneurship trainings and for the preparation of business plans.
- Group assignments: with a view that participants get to know each other as much as possible, coordinate expectations in prepare a common business idea, they should be given a lot of group assignments. This will also promote teamwork and strengthen the group as a whole.
- It is recommended to create a network charter, where should be defined the purpose or goals of the group (which have to be connected with the entrepreneurial idea), competences that group possesses, methods of management and communication in the group and mutual commitments of group members.

Responses of trainees:
- Most of trainees have not attended similar workshop, therefor it was a novelty for them.
- A couple of participants have left training courses in the GROW project despite initial motivation training. The reasons for this were varied:
  - They searched a regular job at another employer (which is the easier path than designing own business idea).

- Lack of entrepreneurial initiative.
- A couple of trainees had their own business idea, but were not willing to share it and develop with others.
- Motivation for working in the group: at some trainees motivation for group work has decreased due to coordination, which is needed to work in the group and due to dilemmas that arise in developing a common business idea.

Other issues:

What is needed is intensive communication between tutors with the aim of coordinating the implementation of individual contents between various training programs. The final objective of the training is the participants' transforming of a business idea into a business plan. This task it is more difficult for the participants if the implementation of different training programs is not content and time aligned. The key areas of training programs which require more cooperation between mentors are:
- Self-help group - Entrepreneurship: in connection with knowledge, competencies and goals of the group as a whole, it is necessary to accede to the preparation of entrepreneurial objectives.
- Entrepreneurship - Multifunctional farming: in connection with the entrepreneurial goals of the group, there has to be adjusted at least part of the content of the program in agriculture.

In order to reduce dropout rates of participants during training, it makes sense to define mutual rights and obligations with signing the agreement before starting training.

c) Entrepreneurship

Evaluation of training programmes by trainees

Almost all trainees liked training courses in the area of entrepreneurship. They found these workshops useful. Training completely fulfilled expectations of almost all of trainees.

Trainees were very satisfied with the quality of lectures. They indicated that contents were clearly presented and understandable.

For majority of trainees the most interesting and important topics of the entrepreneurship training were:
- On entrepreneurship training courses were presented also contents, which may be useful also in everyday life.
- Trainees have recognized which are the characteristics of successful entrepreneurs.
- Participants have realized how display in transparent mode their revenues and costs, which is useful for their everyday life.
- Trainees learned how to put/transfer ideas into real life.
- On workshops trainees learnt how to establish social enterprise.

At the entrepreneurship workshops participants missed the following:
- It was too short a time to get to know the other trainees, to jointly step into action and to prepare business plan till the end of the workshop.
- Participants were very different, so it was sometimes difficult to prepare a common business plan.

Some of trainees faced with the same difficulties as in the horticultural workshops: on the workshops were also women with small children and school children and sometimes it was difficult to plan things at home in order to participate on workshop.

Evaluation of training programmes by trainers

Trainers pointed out the following commnets:

Time frame for implementation of workshops:
- There was enough time to carry out lectures. The participants had also the possibility of consultations outside regular lessons time.
- The time of lectures was well chosen and integrated in the overall project implementation.
- Verification of business ideas and business plan preparation should start as early as possible, otherwise the time is running out towards the end of training to complete the business plan. "The theoretical content" of a business plan may be done through practical assignments, i.e. homework.

Location of trainings:
- Some of the training locations were outside centers. The choice of these locations is satisfactory and in accordance with the implementation of the project contents.
- The disadvantage of such sites is that participants need more time to travel to these locations.

Conditions for practical work:
- All teaching materials that have been needed for the practical implementation of workshops were provided.
- For the presentation of interesting entrepreneurial contents on the Internet it is necessary to provide adequate access to the Internet.

Training methods:
In carrying out the entrepreneurship workshops the proved methods have been used, which have been tested on different target groups and were thus appropriate also for this target group:
- A combination of lectures and practical work in small groups is recommended.
- Group homework in which the participants are expected and should work together; in this way they know one another and share their experiences.
- Use of team building techniques: it is recommended to use tasks which strengthen the team spirit. This is particularly recommended in cases when the motivation for work drops.

Providing mentorship also after completion of trainings: in order to realize the common business ideas it is necessary to provide mentorship even after completion of trainings. Otherwise it is very likely that due to various obstacles, the business idea will not be realized.

Other issues:
In the future, it is necessary to increase cooperation between different trainers with the aim to adapt the contents of individual workshops to the participants' interests.

4) TRAINING OUTCOMES

During implementation of training programmes and at providing mentorship after the end of training we have we have found out the following:
- Italy: 6 trainees established common cooperative and 1 trainee social enterprise.
- Hungary: 4 trainees are planning to start a new enterprise or develop the existing own business. Majority if trainees would like to participate in advanced course.
- Slovenia: 2 trainees have established common private institute. 5 trainees have prepared a network charter where they defined common competences, common goals and ways of collaboration.