

PRISON AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

an experience of
intervention in the
Brians 1 and
Wad-Ras prisons

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Introduction to the collection

This publication sees the inauguration of a new project by the **Associació de Planificació Familiar de Catalunya i Balears** (Catalonia and Balearics Family Planning Association – APF-CIB), in which we bring together the work done on the lines of action where we have been developing our activity. So often, organisations work intensely on the planning and execution of the different activities we are concerned with, but in the majority of cases we do not have time to share the thinking behind our approaches or the results of the interventions we carry out with the public and other professionals. For this reason, we are presenting this collection to communicate our experiences to anyone who may be interested.

This collection, therefore, emerges from our desire to write about what we do: on some of the things that we think turn out well, but also on everything that we often don't talk of any further than on our journeys on the underground, car or bus. We are referring, in this last point, to some of the problems, conflicts, doubts and insecurities that appear during the development of the

project. We are referring to the contradictions that repeatedly surface and challenge us, and which robustly question the objectives of that which we propose or proposed. Working with these contradictions is not an easy task, but our motivation is that, in doing so, it always enriches us.

And thinking in this enrichment, we have decided to share everything we have learned on each journey and on each project of the undertaking. We hope that, in this account of our experiences, some of you may find ideas, concepts and methods that may be of use.

This first number of the collection is dedicated to the *Programa sobre drets sexuals i reproductius per a dones empresonades* (Programme on the sexual and reproductive rights of imprisoned women), and on its pages we share with you the results of our work and also some thoughts we have had during the development of the project.

If you would like to make any comments on the publication, to contribute information or your own experiences, or simply to get in touch with us, you can write to us here: coordinacioprojectes@apfcib.org

About us

The Associació de Planificació Familiar de Catalunya i Balears (APFCIB) is an interdisciplinary, non-governmental organisation working at an autonomous-region level, formed of persons with an interest in the promotion and defence of Sexual and Reproductive Rights. It was established in Barcelona in 1982, as a result of the appearance of Family Planning Centres. The objectives of the association include to boost, foment and raise awareness, prevention and the education of society in the area of sexual and reproductive health.

It is one of the founding organisations of the Federación de Planificación Familiar Estatal (Spanish Family Planning Federation – FPFE), a body that incorporates all the associations that work at a state-wide level. Similarly, it is a member of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) that works for the promotion and defence of sexual and reproductive health with similar associations in various countries around the world. At a regional level, it also forms part of the Xarxa de Dones per la Salut (Women’s Network for Health), the Xarxa de Sida i Món Local (AIDS and Local Sphere Network) and collaborates actively with Ca la Dona and other organisations in Catalonia.

The APFCIB is registered on the non-profit organisation census of the Generalitat de Catalunya's Direcció General de Dret i Entitats Jurídiques (Directorate General of Law and Legal Entities) and functions on an assembly basis, although the Board of Directors is the body that defines and supervises the daily running of the Association.

Since its foundation, the APFCIB has worked to ensure that the Sexual and Reproductive Rights of the population are effective. To this end, in its early stages it spearheaded a campaign to highlight and raise awareness of the need for family planning centres, until achieving their integration into the public health network. Similarly, it has played a part in all campaigns demanding these rights, such as the legalisation of abortion, the universalisation of contraceptive methods and of sex education, and the improvement of care services for the population in this field, along with many other lines of action.

From the APFCIB, we want to promote an interdisciplinary form of understanding the defence of sexual and reproductive health rights, and to this end, right from its beginnings projects seeking to achieve these rights have been designed and executed. We have created and continue to create spaces and channels for meeting, making demands, exchanging and reflecting to debate and work deeper into the subject of our concern, approached from various aspects. This work has been planned at all times in collaboration and permanent contact with other organisations, institutions and public administrations. The activities of the APFCIB over these almost 30 years have continuously adapted to the context and requirements of each moment and to the demands of the most vulnerable populations, without losing sight of its overriding objective: to respond to the population with programmes, projects and actions that seek to defend, disseminate and consolidate Sexual and Reproductive Rights.

Preface

In September 2015, the Member States of the United Nations agreed on the new Sustainable Development Framework for the coming 15 years: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The slogan of the 2030 Agenda is **“No-one left behind”**.

The Declaration document **“Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”** was adopted by consensus at the United Nations General Assembly, the product of a process of more than three years’ negotiations and discussions. This process of drafting and negotiation had, for the first time, the participation of new players: the organised civil society, the private sector and the academic world.

The women’s and feminist movement was also present during the process. Activists and organisations rallied to seek to attempt to achieve that gender equality, empowerment and women’s and girls’ rights were at the heart of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The 2030 Agenda defines 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that replace the previous Millennium Development Goals. They go from SDG 1 to eradicate poverty to SDG 3 that seeks to “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”, passing through SDG 5 to “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”, SDG 10 to “Reduce inequality within and among countries” up to SDG 17 to “Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development”.

The 2030 Agenda Declaration contains as its foundational elements international treaties on human rights and expresses its commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action and the Cairo Programme of Action, two of the most important international agreements regarding the human rights of women.

It thus defines a new development framework for 2030 that seeks to contribute towards a fairer world. And it does this from a standpoint that considers for the first time three dimensions of sustainable development: social, economic and environmental. By doing this, it seeks to end the traditional isolated work done through projects that do not permit information transfer and addresses, from now on, the phenomena from an integral and holistic perspective.

By signing the Declaration, the United Nations Member States have committed to transfer the Sustainable Development Goals to their state realities. That is, governments at all levels (state, national and local) are compelled to draft and redraft public policies with the aim of achieving the sustainable development set out in the 2030 Agenda.

Like any declaration, the 2030 Agenda is the product of negotiations and discussions and, therefore, contains numerous settlements and compromises that translate in practice into great

gaps with significant loopholes that bring their effectiveness into question. The majority of these agreements impact most severely on the life and bodies of women.

Despite the 2030 Agenda having a Sustainable Development Goal that exclusively addresses the empowerment of women and girls and the achievement of gender equality (SDG 5), and also gender-sensitive goals in the rest of the SDGs, analysis of the document, from an intersectional feminist policy position, can only be critical.

From the women's and feminist movement, we find that the 2030 Agenda fails to make an analysis that tackles the structural causes of inequalities, discriminations and oppressions. It does not question economic growth, nor does it have an intersectional approach (Crenshaw, 1989). It maintains, although in a more moderated way, an instrumental view of women and girls as it clearly states that their empowerment is key for economic growth. And, naturally, it avoids the explicit recognition of all sexual and reproductive rights of women, thereby denying recognition of their sexual autonomy.

For feminists, women's bodies are key territory to achieving gender justice, social justice and sustainable development. The recognition of the right that all women have to exercise control over their sexuality and over their own body is the crucial step for women to be able to access full citizenship and for true sustainable development to thereby be achieved. For the APFCIB, the body is a political category in which the feminist discourse is incarnated.

To achieve this, amongst many other things, at the APFCIB we have established a strategy for political advocacy that involves linking global agendas with local agendas. That is to say, we

link the international spaces of human rights and sustainable development with local spaces. One of our lines of work is to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Catalonia and at a world level. To accomplish this, we form part of global women and feminist networks whose objective is to impact on this to achieve the full exercise of rights of women. The objective is that the 2030 Agenda should also be a feminist Agenda.

We link the networking we carry out in international spaces with the work we are developing in the region of Catalonia. With great efforts, we try to make the two spaces feed back into one another and link up as we understand that this is the key to achieving our objective: the recognition and full exercise of sexual and reproductive rights.

It's not easy. The work of international political advocacy requires human and economic resources and expertise and an immense amount of time. Historically, feminist and women's movement organisations do not gain access to funding and we do not have a presence in the spaces where decision-making on development funding takes place. Also, we rarely have flexible, long-term funding that permits us to carry out sustained and transformative work. Even so, with a lot of effort over many hours, building alliances, networking and plenty of imagination and creativity, we are present in key international spaces.

And, within this strategy for political advocacy that the APFCIB carries out, linking global agendas with local agendas, we focus on the women who are featured in this publication: women deprived of liberty and who participate in the APFCIB's intervention programme in the area of sexual and reproductive rights in prison, and we once again pick up the slogan of the 2030 Agenda: "No-one left behind". And we ask ourselves:

- In what way does the 2030 Agenda affect the women who are the protagonists of this publication?
- Will the 2030 Agenda contribute in some way to transforming their lives?

The answer that comes to us after reading the 2030 Agenda Declaration, analysing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and reading their objectives and indicators, is that, most probably the 2030 Agenda does not offer women deprived of liberty any sort of response.

The first thing we identify after reading the final document is one of the characteristics of this collective: its invisibility. Women deprived of liberty do not appear in the 2030 Agenda: they are not named, or mentioned, or present, or visible. Women deprived of liberty probably exemplify and represent, better than any other collective, the intersectional feminist criticism of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

Through these women, diverse and at the same time unique, through the reasons they find themselves in prison and their living conditions during their stay, we can identify each one of the gaps and loopholes presented in the 2030 Agenda with respect to the human rights of women. In the same way, their lives and realities help us to understand how these gaps impact on their lives: their vulnerability is increased and the regression in the exercise of their rights is accentuated.

The intersectional feminist criticism to the 2030 Agenda condemns the heteropatriarchal, heteronormative and racist capitalist system, with its processes of wild accumulation of capital and consumerism that are based on the domination and exploitation of women's bodies as one of the key factors in preserving inequalities, discriminations and injustices.

The 2030 Agenda does not tackle or question the structural issues that permit an unprecedented concentration of wealth in the hands of the richest 1% of the world population. This process of accumulation, added to an androcentric, patriarchal, sexist and racist view of the world, constitutes one of the causes that fosters the entry of women into prison.

We are in a world where extracting industries force the displacement of many populations: where the neoliberal policies of the privatisation of public services and of the accumulation and concentration of the wealth of a few keep the best part of the population in a situation of sheer survival; a world where the signature of the Treaties on free trade imply the loss of the sovereignty of the States in favour of markets; a planet where the dispute for land and the agribusinesses model result in thousands of displaced peoples and the abandonment of lands; where the *maquila* is imposed as a production model; a world where we are assisting in the criminalisation of territories by drug trafficking, etc. All this has had the consequence of, amongst many things, the feminisation and criminalisation of poverty.

Because, what the realities of women deprived of liberty overwhelmingly show us are, amongst other things, the processes of the feminisation and criminalisation of poverty which we are assisting in the context of compounded neoliberal capitalism. And in these processes, women's bodies, as always, are there to serve their families, the States, etc. In short, women's bodies are there to serve others.

It is no surprise, therefore, that between 1980 and 1994 the number of women in prison in Spain rose by 800%, from 487 to 3,884 women convicted in under 15 years. (Naredo, 2005). Spain is the European country with the highest proportion of women in its prison population: 8.0%, compared to 3.8% in

France, 4.3% in Italy, 4.8% in Germany, 6.1% in Hungary and 6.2% in England (Cruells and Igareda, 2005).

The majority of women deprived of liberty in Spain are there for crimes against public health. Offences for the sale of drugs situated on the final link of the sales chain. Moreover, in recent years, in both Spain and other European countries, the percentage of foreign women prisoners has increased significantly (Naredo, 2005).

Women deprived of liberty, although they constitute a small number of the prison population of Spain, receive longer prison sentences than men. Sentences for the same crime committed by a man and a woman are longer for women. They gain provisional release to a lesser extent and their conditions of imprisonment are worse. All this is caused by the gender stereotypes and prejudices that befall women who commit a crime. Women who, in the eyes of a patriarchal system, have dared to transgress social control and have broken with the gender mandate. For all these reasons, the patriarchal system punishes them in an abusive and continuous manner.

Furthermore, over recent years, numerous feminist studies in different countries have revealed a significant piece of data: the majority of women deprived of liberty have been victims of male violence. Many of them, from childhood, have habitually suffered male violence (Bodelón, 2012). More specifically, in Catalonia, in a study carried out by the Fundació Surt in 2005: "Violència contra les Dones, anàlisi en la població penitenciària femenina" (Violence against Women, analysis in the female prison population) shows that 88.4% of women deprived of liberty have suffered male violence.

And it is from this point that the APFCIB started its work with groups of women deprived of liberty in 2013. Through the **Associació Planificació Familiar de Catalunya i Balears's intervention programme in the area of sexual and reproductive rights in prison** we seek to support them in their processes of empowerment by carrying out workshops where we work on sexuality, the body, pleasures, desires, taking care of the body, interests and requirements. And as a key element, self-knowledge. All this framed within the perspective of sexual and reproductive rights as the human rights of women.

As Marcela Lagarde (2012) reminds us, “Sexual and reproductive rights are vital powers which, in exercising them, have the capacity to transform relationships and societies with the elimination of the patriarchal sexual powers of men and of institutions over women”.

With this publication, we hope to share the APFCIB's experiences and learning and hope that it will be of use to you. But above all, we want to make women who are deprived of their liberty visible. To remember that they are legal subjects and that public policies are obliged to include them.

We also hope that this publication can serve as a tool for political advocacy at both a local and international level, and that it contributes to making the 2030 Agenda include the collective of women deprived of liberty. We will continue conveying this message clearly and energetically in local and international spaces: without sexual and reproductive rights, without the human rights of women, without an intersectionality approach and without feminisms, it will not be possible to comply with the new 2030 Agenda.

Introduction

This publication is structured into two separate parts: the first focuses on offering a view of the prison institution from a gender perspective. In this part we will also provide some data corresponding to the 4 last interventions made in the two prisons, Brians 1 and Wad-Ras, and which responds in the first place to the sociodemographic profile of the women that have participated in the training sessions and in the second place, to data related to sexual and reproductive health.

The second part of the publication centres on a reflection on the work carried out within the context of a prison institution and also offers a reflection on the work method used in the intervention.

These are the **general objectives** proposed in the intervention project:

1. To offer educational and training activities that break with the standard given model of gender identity and gender attributes that seek to (re-) educate the women on

traditionally-assigned roles and which will help in their processes of empowerment.

2. To offer a space where, from the viewpoint of sexual and reproductive rights, other ways of experiencing sexual, emotional and family relationships are offered that go beyond the hegemonic norm, which is often presented and lived as being the only possible option.
3. To provide information and knowledge from a gender and intersectional perspective on health and sexual and reproductive rights in order to offer tools for making decisions to be able to experience sexuality free from gender violence.

We consider that, with more success in some interventions and more difficulties in others, as will be explained in the second part of this publication, the objectives proposed in the project have been achieved, intervention after intervention. The evaluation indicators have demonstrated thus and this is a fact that makes us think of the need for the project to continue and, consequently, that this should be a long-term project about which we will once again be able to write another publication within this collection. We hope so. But for the moment, let's start with the first.

1. The intervention

Gaining entry into prisons is not easy. The fact of going there every year makes no difference: it is always complicated. This makes us aware that we are dealing with a closed institution where movements are constantly supervised. The educational teams constitute an essential figure for us: they are our point of entry into the prison. If communication with them is easy so much the better: if not, things get more complicated.

The intervention programme in the area of sexual and reproductive rights in prison began in 2013 with a yearly intervention in the Wad-Ras Women's Prison (Barcelona); 3 years later, the intervention extended to also include Brians 1 (Sant Esteve de Sesrovires), more specifically the Departament d'Atenció Especialitzada – DAE (Specialised Care Unit). Over these years around 100 women have participated in the programme.

Each one of the interventions is developed over 5 weekly sessions. One of the sessions is reserved for the individual attention spaces, where the participating women can choose to have a private space to talk with one of the two professionals. These spaces, however, can also arise spontaneously any day after the workshop, whether at the request of the participants or proposed by the workshop facilitators.

With regard to the number of women that formed the groups, this was variable and fluctuated between 6 and 11 women per group. And in general, their participation was conditioned by the daily rhythm of the prison. Participation in the workshop was developed in parallel with professional visits, scheduled outings, etc. Furthermore, as we will explain later on, participation in the workshops varied greatly depending on the prison. For example, attendance in the activities programmed in the DAE was compulsory, whereas at the Wad-Ras it was totally voluntary.

The text that we present here is the product of the work and reflections of the two professionals that carried out the intervention over these years, whilst the data provided corresponds solely to the four interventions carried out in 2016 and 2017 in both centres: Brians 1, where 3 of the 4 interventions were carried out; and Wad-Ras, where there was only one intervention. A total of 35 women participated in these 4 workshops.

With regard to the results, they do not purport to be representative of the experiences of all women who find themselves in prison, but given the difficulty in obtaining primary data in the area of prison services, we hope to be a modest contribution to this field with the aim of showing that, once again, achieving rights is the result of the intersection of different factors.

The act of carrying out an intervention in an area where the people with whom one is working are deprived of their liberty makes the intervention different and raises many questions regarding the intervention. Notwithstanding this, the spaces in which an intervention was carried out, in the DAE and Wad-Ras, presented substantial differences that also affected or modelled our intervention. In the following, we will detail a description of each of the areas and also a reflection on the intervention that was carried out there.

And finally, we wish to point out that women with functional diversity, mental disorders or non-binary identities are missing from this publication, but this does not mean they do not exist. Indeed, feminist criminology literature signals how some aspects are overlooked by prison services and we are fully aware of this.

1.1. The intervention in the DAE (Brians 1)

Three of the interventions took place in the Specialised Care Unit (DAE) at Brians 1. A DAE, which according to the Generalitat de Catalunya's Justice Department...

“Is a therapeutic resource that adopts the model of therapeutic communities and is located structurally within a prison centre, with architectural and functional isolation from the rest of the centre inmates. In these units, drug dependency is tackled from an in-

tegral perspective and, in general, with an intensive intervention, free of drugs, that seeks the total abstinence of the user. The programme has different therapeutic phases that gradually help the user move to the outside to generalise their learning. The duration of the intervention is between nine months and one year”.

This means that the women who are in the DAE live in a space that is isolated from the other women in prison, do not share the prison yard, do not share the canteen ... Their coexistence and interpersonal relationships are reduced to the group that is undergoing treatment. Being in the DAE is not simple; the regime of activities is intensive and compulsory and treatment can be hard, and this therefore confers some special characteristics to the groups we have worked with.

With regard to how it functions, all the activities developed in the DAE are programmed by this department's educational team and are compulsory for the women inmates. This means that, regardless of their enthusiasm for or interest in the activities, the women have to participate in them. In the case of the intervention presented here, this also met with this condition: that is, all the women present in the DAE had to attend it, whether they wanted to or not. The condition of its obligatory nature, as we shall explain further on, implied a difficulty but at the same time helped some aspects of the development of the workshop.

With regard to the individual spaces, in the sessions carried out in the DAE these nearly always took place on a day that had been previously agreed with the inmates, but also, on occasions, spontaneously and informally outside the programmed day. The reason for the requests were diverse and varied.

1.2. The intervention in the Centre Penitenciari de Dones de Barcelona, Wad-Ras (Wad-Ras Women's Prison, Barcelona)

Wad-Ras is unique as a prison. Here there are women who are in preventative regime (women who are still awaiting sentence), women in ordinary regime or second degree (who are already serving their sentence) and women who are in open regime or third degree (who can sleep at the centre or not). The fact of being a space where women with such different situations live together confers the prison a different atmosphere to that of Brians.

The participation in the Wad-Ras workshops was voluntary: that is, the women could choose whether they wanted to participate or not, but nevertheless, there was a prior filter as the centre educators offered the opportunity to participate to those women who, according to their criteria, could need, or were at a moment when they could benefit from, involvement in the workshop. Word of mouth between the women themselves resulted in them joining in some of the sessions spontaneously without necessarily having formed part of them during the other days. This flexibility was a strength, but also created some difficulty for the development of the workshops, as we will explain later.

With regard to the individual attention, at Wad-Ras these were not developed in all the cases. One of the main reasons had to do with the absence of physical spaces that would permit the necessary privacy. Notwithstanding this, in this publication we will not talk about these spaces of individual attention, but rather focus on the spaces of group work.

The architecture of prisons is a factor that defines the life and experience of the imprisonment of people there; for the professionals it can also constitute a difficulty and a fact to bear

in mind in the design and implementation of the intervention. The structure of Wad-Ras is very different to that of Brians, as this corresponds to the *Centre-type* model opened in 1991, and which all prisons built since then have followed. This makes getting around inside Wad-Ras easier, even though there are doors that separate the spaces and make circulation difficult, with officials who are constantly opening and closing them in front of and behind you. Brians, on the other hand, is much more oppressive. Perhaps you enter distracted, talking with your colleague. Being closed inside a prison for a couple of hours is considered something of little consequence, but in reality it is not so. You enter without a second thought, but when you leave you feel a lightness come over you. The workshops last only two hours, a workshop that may seem, just as so many others, like one that is being done in a training centre, a civic centre or college, but it is this lightness that indicates to us that we are in a different place, and even though your head doesn't seem to notice it, your body does. Wad-Ras also closes you in, but you feel more fluidity in the supervised movements you make.

2. Imprisonment from a gender perspective

In 2010, the Spanish state occupied first place in the EU-27 with regard to the number of women in prison. According to the Spanish Prison Services (2016) in December 2015 there were 4,113 women in prison; the Spanish state underwent the largest increase between the '80s and '90s last century.

This fact, in the context of the Spanish state, may be explained by the interplay of diverse factors, such as have been noted by Almeda (2003) and summarised in: a precarious welfare state, an increase in crimes against public health, a punitive system characterised by the absence of alternatives to the punishment of deprivation of liberty, linked with the stiffening of penal sanctions for certain types of offences.

In spite of this, women in prison represent a much lower rate than men in prison. In December 2015, 9 out of every 10 persons imprisoned were men: 92.2% (Spanish Prison Services, 2016). This numerical inferiority has translated into, as feminist researchers have already pointed out, various inequalities with regard to the resources and approaches to prison treatment.

Imprisoned women have traditionally been a forgotten group of the population, practically kicked into the side-lines of public policies. It seems that the walls of the prisons make the women inside invisible, and for the public administrations too. The female prison population come from vulnerable social sectors, at risk of social exclusion. This vulnerability and exclusion not only happen outside prison, but also within.

The prison experience is full of gender biases: even though the prisons seem to be far from social life, their walls are not impenetrable to everything that happens outside, and sexism and the heteropatriarchy cross through the prison walls to reproduce an androcentric way of functioning within the prison.

Imprisonment is, in itself, an act that violates the rights of the imprisoned women. In this context, it is not strange to assert that if the sexual and reproductive rights in the general population are already little recognised and have to be constantly fought for, within the context of prisons they are even more forgotten. Women in prison, generally-speaking, also present various idiosyncrasies with regard to sexual and reproductive rights, as we will show later.

3. Women worked with

in this section, we offer sociodemographic data on the women we have worked with. To collect the data, a questionnaire was drawn up that gathered information on their sociodemographic profile, their prison experience and their sexual and reproductive health. Data has only been included from the women who voluntarily agreed to reply to it and to which they had previously signed their informed consent. Not all the questionnaires were completed: that is, not all the workshop participants answered all the questions on the questionnaire – only those that they exclusively wanted to, and we will provide notes on this during the description.

3.1. Sociodemographic profile

Feminist criminology studies point out that traditionally women in prison demonstrate some common life experiences and characteristics, and which were also repeated, to a greater or lesser degree, in the women who participated in the workshops. This information is relevant to understanding the foundations for the workshop teaching and the associated intervention. As we have already said, the data provided here does not purport to be of a universal nature.

If we take a look at the sociodemographic data, we can see that the ages of the women with whom we worked in the prison were between 21 and 52. The average age was 36.5 and the majority of inmates were in the age group between 31 and 40 years of age. If we compare this with the most recent data available, published by the Spanish Prison Services, we can see that, in 2015, women in prison according to their age group were distributed in the following way: 18 and 20 years, 2.5%; between 21 and 25 years, 11.9%; between 26 and 30 years, 16.0%; between 31 and 40 years, 34.5%; between 41 and 60 years, 32.3%; and older than 60 years, 2.8%.

Table 1. Distribution by age group

Age range	Workshop participants	Workshop participants %	Total female prison population	Total female prison population %
18 to 20 years	0	0%	56	2.5%
21 to 25 years	1	2.95%	262	12.05%
26 to 30 years	5	14.70%	354	16.03%
31 to 40 years	16	47.05%	761	34.48%
41 to 60 years	12	35.30%	713	32.30%
Over 60 years	0	0%	61	2.76%
Total	34	100%	2207	100%

Source: prepared using data collected and the Spanish Prison Services report, 2016.

With regard to the prison regimes, all the participants were classified as second degree and some third degree. In 2015, the majority of the female prison population was classified as second degree at 72.7%; 25.1% of women were classified as third degree; and only 2.2% were first degree (Spanish Prison Services, 2016).

We were able to glean little data with regard to sentences, as the question was answered in only 12 instances and 3 of these were in preventative regime, awaiting their trial and sentence. The rest of the sentences fluctuated between 11 months and 12 years. The average sentence was around 5 years.

With regard to the level of education, there were mostly women who had finished their secondary education (16 out of 35 women), followed by 13 women who had finished primary educa-

tion, in third place 4 women who had no studies, and finally, 2 participants who had university studies. In the Spanish Prison Services report, this data is not separated by gender.

Table 2. Distribution by level of studies gained

Level of studies	Workshop participants
Without studies	4
Primary	13
Secondary	16
University	2
Postgraduate	0

Source: prepared using data collected, 2016.

We will now analyse some of some other characteristics which, as feminist literature on prisons notes, are characteristics that are recurrent amongst the imprisoned female population. As well as not gaining sufficient attention from the prison services, some of these characteristics can represent a source of stigma, such as the case of motherhood, which, as we shall see, is a distinguishing factor of women in prison but which at the same time doubly stigmatises them: for breaking the rules being mothers (Francés and Serrano, 2011).

3.2. Motherhood

Motherhood is perhaps one of the most defining features of imprisoned women. 80% of female inmates in the Spanish state are mothers. What's more, this group's fertility rate is higher than non-imprisoned women. More specifically, in the case of the Spanish state, in 2007 the fertility rate was 2.7% whilst that of women outside prison was 1.3%. 38% of these women

with children were considered to be a large family, and 70% of their children were younger than 18 (Yagüe, 2007). According to data collected through the questionnaire, of the 33 women who answered, 25 of them had children and 8 didn't. With regard to their total number of children, they had 52. The average was, therefore, 2 children per woman.

Table 3. Number of children

Number of children	Workshop participants
1	9
2	5
3	7
4	1
5	5
6	2
N/A	1

Source: prepared using data collected and the Spanish Prison Services report 2016.

Some of the characteristics of this population that occupies first place for imprisonment in the Europe of the 27 include a fertility rate that is higher than the average in the Spanish state at 2.7% and 1.3% respectively; 38% are considered a large, single-parent family, as in the majority of cases the women are the family heads (Ballesteros and Almeda, 2015).

Being a single parent is also a distinguishing feature, as many of the women in prison who are mothers are the heads of the single-parent households, a fact that means that they are responsible for maintaining their children, usually exclusively, an aspect that makes the deprivation of liberty an even greater handicap. Even though we didn't ask directly (if at the time of

detention or at present they still constitute a single-parent household), we did ask who their children were living with whilst they were in prison. 19 women answered the question, “Who do your children live with?” In 12 cases the children were living with their biological father; however this circumstance did not imply that they were currently a couple. In fact, if we look at how many of the women with whom we worked had a partner at present, 17 did, 13 didn’t and 5 women did not answer the question and therefore we cannot know if they formed a couple or not. In the 13 cases where they did answer the question, we know that 11 of their partners were not in prison, two were in autonomous regions that were not Catalonia and two of their partners were also in prison.

With regard to the sexual orientation of the women who participated in the workshops, all the women with the exception of two identified as being heterosexual, regardless of the fact that in prison they could choose a different orientation.

Just as feminist criminology has described, the fact of being a mother in prison is a stigma that defines the experience of imprisoned women, as these not only break with the norms of femininity for the fact of being in prison, but they also break the ideal of being a good mother, a fact that aggravates the given stigma, as the construct of the norm of femininity does not admit the dual transgression of being a woman, mother and being in prison (Naredo, 2007).

3.3. Offences against public health and drug addiction

According to the 2016 General Report by the Spanish Prison Administration which was drawn up with 2015 data, 39.4% of women in prison were there for offences that the penal code typifies as offences against public health, which, amongst other things, involves trafficking substances categorised as illegal. In

second place, 31% of the cases were offences against assets and the socio-economic order. That is, 7 out of 10 women in prison were there for one of these reasons. The average sentence for this type of crime is six years.

Offences against public health related to the fact of being a foreign woman often translates into the offence of trafficking, popularly known as *mules*. In the group with which we worked, there were several women in this situation sharing very young ages and economic needs as their sole and principle motivation, having no addiction. This was the case of the women from Brazil and Argentina, who had arrived at Barcelona Airport and had been accused of drug trafficking.

With regard to addictions, in accordance with the MIP research project (2005), a large number of women deprived of liberty in Spanish prisons have addictions to different substances, as Igareda notes: in 2007, between 50% and 70% of imprisoned women had an addiction. However, it has not been possible to find any official data as the Spanish Prison Services do not present this data separated by gender.

Of the women we worked with, only those in the DAE were in the process of recovery from an addiction, whilst the women at Wad-Ras, as a general rule, had no addiction, though with some exceptions.

3.4. Migrant women/women without Spanish nationality

27.4% of women imprisoned in the Spanish state in 2015 were foreigners and there is, therefore, an overrepresentation of foreign women in the prison population. In the case of the women with whom we had a relationship in Wad-Ras, this was a highly defining feature as the group was formed of women from Brazil, Ecuador and Argentina who were accused of drug trafficking,

whilst in the three groups with which we worked at Brians 1, there was only one foreign woman, from Morocco.

3.5. Partner violence

The incidence of violence in women in prison is high. According various researchers (Cruells and Igareda, 2005) an extremely high number of women in prison have suffered some type of male violence: this includes aggressions during childhood, sexual aggressions, abuse within the family, forced prostitution, etc. More specifically, the MIP project (2005) positions the data at 88.4% of women in prison.

Despite the questionnaire supplied not collecting this variable, typically the participants stated that they had suffered situations of violence in both childhood (mainly from their parents) and in adulthood, in this case within the framework of sexual-emotional relationships. These accounts on the violence suffered arose in both the group spaces as well as in the individual spaces that we offered at the end of the sessions.

4. Sexual and reproductive rights in prison

Sexual and reproductive rights are founded on the right to enjoy a satisfactory and pleasurable sexual life at all stages of life, free of coercion and discrimination, and respectful of the sexual autonomy of persons. These are based on the recognition and respect of the ability to freely and responsibly decide, without discrimination, coercion or violence, if children are wanted or not. This implies that they also guarantee sexual and reproductive health, understood as being a physical, emotional, mental and social state of wellbeing in relation to sexuality (FPFE, 2010).

Sexual and reproductive rights, amongst other issues, comprise the right to personal autonomy and recognition before the law,

as well as the right to sexual freedom. These are rights that imply that all persons have to have control and have to be able to decide freely on matters related to sexuality, the right to choose their sexual partners and to experience fully their potential and sexual pleasure, within the context of non-discrimination and with consent. And also the right to health and to the benefits of scientific developments, through which everyone has the right to enjoy the highest possible standard of physical and mental health that includes the essential determinants of health and access to sexual health care for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of all sexual concerns, problems and disorders.

The right to law and information and education in sexual and reproductive matters are fundamental and, in particular, access to specific informative material to guarantee the health and wellbeing of persons. The education and information provided should be sufficient to guarantee that the decisions relating to their sexual and reproductive life are made with full, free and informed consent. This is a right that this intervention signs up to.

We must keep in mind that the principle of universality is applied to all these rights: that is, all persons, without any type of discrimination, have the right to their full enjoyment. They are also inalienable rights, meaning that no person may renounce them, and for this to be effective it is necessary that the entire population knows of these rights and knows that they can exercise them. Finally, the principle of interdependence is also applied to them, as all the rights are closely related, in such a way that the full exercise of each one is not possible without the development of the others, whilst each one has its own course.

Our intervention, within the context of this programme, translates as bringing this framework of rights to the institutions that deprive women of liberty. As we have already pointed out, prisons are not structures that are alien or impermeable to trends

that occur within society as a whole and, therefore, the gender stereotypes and roles typical of a patriarchal society are also reproduced in prisons: the lack of information, taboos and prejudices surrounding sexuality and reproduction are also present as well as a lack of attention with regard to the needs of the female prison population, that can be expressed in the lack of tampons and sanitary towels (of more than one type) up to the lack of care or information.

Similarly, some of the characteristics of imprisoned women clearly show us the relevance of an intervention of these characteristics, as prisons continue to house women with a socially-determined profile: poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion.

These characteristics present in the majority of female inmates show how awareness on their own rights is hazy and for this reason intense work needs to be carried out on bolstering their sexual and reproductive rights so that they can establish and experience their sexual-emotional relationships freely, fully and in an informed manner.

Finally, sexual and reproductive health is a vital aspect in the drafting of public policies, as it involves the guarantee of rights and the improvement in the quality of life of the population, which should also include persons who are in a system that deprives them of their liberty. Our intervention, nevertheless, was aimed at strengthening the autonomy of the women in relation to gender issues and sexual and reproductive rights. For this, we formulated 8 questions that specifically involved the right to information, education and the right to choose to have, or not to have, children.

One of the questions we asked was when the last time they had received gynaecological care was. Of the 34 women, the majority, 23, had received gynaecological care less than 1 year ago.

Table 4. Last gynaecological visit

Last time they received gynaecological care	Number of workshop participants
Never	1
Less than 1 year ago	23
Between 1 and 3 years	6
More than 3 years ago	1
More than 5 years ago	1
No answer	3

Source: prepared using data collected, 2016.

With regard to the use of contraceptive methods, in general they said they didn't use any (21 women) in spite of 17 of the women stating they had partners. In 3 cases they used a condom, in 7 cases they used hormonal methods: the IUS in 5 cases, and the implant and quarterly injection in one single case. Finally, 1 woman did not answer the question. The question to find out if they had used the morning-after pill received the response that in 13 cases they had used it, in 19 cases they had never used it, and in 3 cases they did not respond to the question.

With regard to deciding whether to have children, we asked if they had had an abortion at any time during their lives, and of the 32 women who answered the question, 16 – 50% – indicated they had had an abortion, whilst the other 16 had never had an abortion. We do not know the number of abortions each woman had had.

With regard to sexually transmitted diseases (STIs), 5 of the women said they had been diagnosed with one. The STIs diagnosed were condiloma in 3 cases, in 1 case the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), and in one case the woman didn't remember what the diagnosis was. 26 women said they had never had any STI diagnosis and in 4 cases, they did not reply to the question.

Finally, and in relation to the right to information and education, we asked the women if they had participated in any sort of training on sexual and reproductive health. Of the 32 responses obtained, in 20 cases they answered yes whilst in 12 cases they said no. On some occasions this training had been imparted within the context of school or in workshops like the one we were developing.

Work methodology and session development

This second part of the publication is dedicated to the intervention work methodology. Constant reflection was viewed as being inevitable when carrying out a socio-educational project of this nature in a closed institution such as a women's prison.

Based on a training-participating approach and respectful of the group participants, in general, the methodology applied permitted:

1. The creation of a space necessary for participation and for expressing prior concerns, experiences and knowledge by the women attending the workshop.
2. Tackling the necessary concepts to acquire and incorporate both knowledge and the necessary skills for the recognition and assumption of sexual and reproductive rights.

As we said, with different methodologies the aim was to offer a space where, from the viewpoint

of sexual and reproductive rights, other ways of experiencing sexual, emotional and family relationships that went beyond the hegemonic perspective would emerge, which is often presented and lived as being the only possible option and also the desired and correct one. With this aim, work was done based on participative dynamics at a group level that encouraged active participation and the process of reflection of the group. By doing this, we showed the gender inequality that affects women of all cultures, countries, ages and social levels and that is expressed in the obligation of having to live their sexual and reproductive lives in accordance with the norm and through a prism that makes women responsible for the violence that men exercise. This implies questioning and relearning the socialisation learned. At no point did the intervention seek to make the women participants feel compelled to become empowered and to change that which they didn't like, but rather it sought to contribute to remove culpability and situate their experiences lived within the context of a patriarchal society.

1. "Successful" experiences and lessons learned

the objective of this section is to present two points of reflection. These are points that do not necessarily have anything exclusively to do with the work with women deprived of liberty, but we do want to include them here as it has been in this project where we have found the space with the colleagues to talk about issues that also frequently recur in other projects where we work with groups of women.

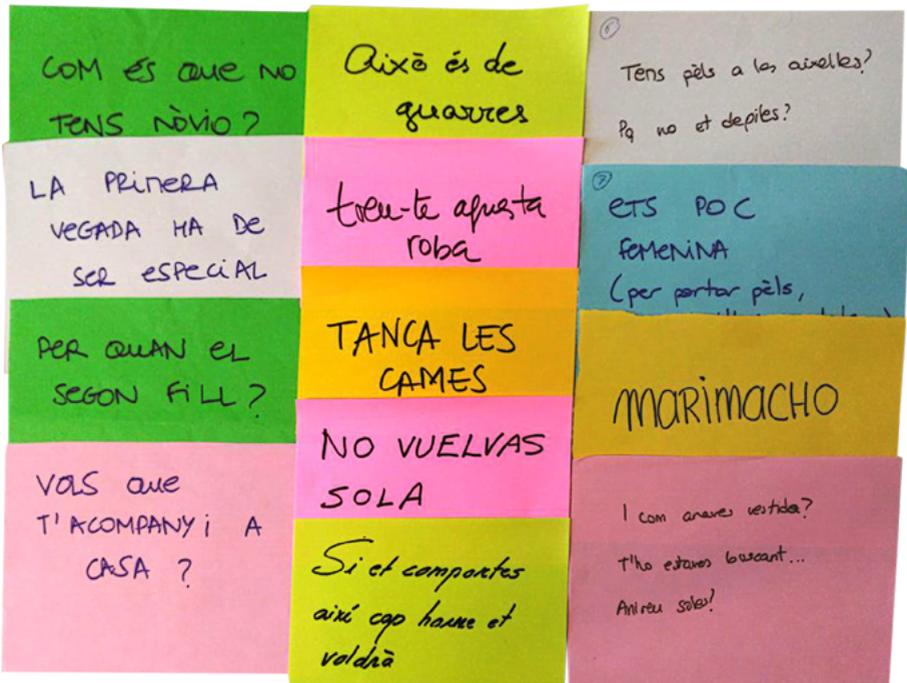
The first of these points of reflection has to do with the methodology we use in the workshops, and this is commented on below, with special attention to the needs to work on the body and emotions in projects like this. The second is a reflection on the most frequent requests and questions by the women who

participate in the workshops and our way of addressing them to offer the inmates some sort of response.

We begin developing the reflection on the work methodology used.

1.1. Methodology that passes through the body

To achieve the first of the project objectives we use role-playing techniques, that allow us to explore how the process of the gender socialisation of the women has been: how they have lived (and continue living) the messages that they have received throughout their lives that have the objective of “building them” as women; how they have assimilated these messages, how, based on these, they have shaped their way of dressing, thinking, moving and living their sexuality and sexual-emotional relationships.



We do this exploration using different phrases that the women draw from their own personal experiences. Phrases from their childhood, and also phrases from other stages in their life, such as the present. Phrases that speak to us of stereotypes and of how these stereotypes can be lived as an imposition, as a form of oppression and denial of freedoms.

Close your legs. What are you wearing? You were asking for it. Are you going alone? How come you don't have a boyfriend? The first time should be special. Only sluts do that. Take those clothes off. That's not very feminine. Have you got hairy armpits? Why don't you wax? Don't come back alone. If you behave like that no man will want you. Tomboy. When's the next baby due? Do you want me to take you home?

Many important reflections on paternal and maternal figures arise from this exercise as the primary agents of socialisation. Sometimes, these reflections blame the mothers and fathers for being the direct issuers of the messages that the women said to have accepted although feeling they were alien to them and their wishes.

Other reflections appreciated that at least one or both of their parents offered a certain amount of freedom to grow and express themselves as they wanted regardless of the sex and gender they had been assigned at birth: a freedom to be the girls and women they wanted to be and not those indicated by female stereotypes. Whatever the case, the reflections always led us to talk of their own transgressions and of those created, perhaps, by these maternal and/or paternal figures.

With regard to their own transgressions, using theatre techniques the ways of being a woman were explored. Even though they felt they formed part of themselves, they felt they had be-

come more relegated, silenced, ignored and judged by the fact of not fitting in with that which is expected of femininity in accordance with the sex-gender system. We explored this, as we said, from any stage of life. We offered only a small pointer: to work on the process of gender socialisation it is not necessary to go looking for highly painful episodes – we can retrieve a phrase that maybe at the time hurt but that now seems distant¹. It is about knowing how you felt, how you think this affected you in the development of your life, what you may have wanted to say but didn't say, and, maybe, having reached this point, doing it: saying what you didn't say. This is an exercise that serves as an excuse to reflect, from emotions and own experiences, on how these messages oppress us. Showing the diversity of “being a woman” and providing a space so that **all the ways of being a woman are welcomed without establishing them into a hierarchy** has been a constant in the workshop, but especially a point worked on using these techniques.

In relation to the previous point, the experience of working in a prison has made us put into practice several methodological changes with respect to our way of working in workshops for women done in other contexts. Over the last year, methodologies where the body, music and theatre have played a greater role have been incorporated. We consider that it is fundamental that **what is learned following logical rationales is put into practice by us and we, therefore, go through the body and emotions**. Passing through the body means experimenting, and often it also means discovering the contradictions that there are between that which we say, that which we feel and how we act (behaviour). On the other hand, and in relation to the work with stereotypes, passing through the body means

1 - Theatre techniques are very powerful tools for working, but can in turn lead us to painful situations that are difficult to manage in a group space of short duration. In this respect, whilst they are tools we can use, we have to respect different criteria that guarantee the safety and care of the group and, obviously, have the approval of the group to explore personal experiences using these techniques.

following the dynamic that we present in this project, giving a response to stereotyped messages: to respond in some way to what they told us or tell us we have to be, giving a place, a first place, to the woman we feel we want to be and not to the woman that we are expected to be. We need to leave behind the stereotype and demonstrate amongst us all the great diversity that exists amongst women.

1.2. Offering/finding the best response

In this section we want to talk about two issues that we consider important to bear in mind in the work with groups of women. The first refers to the most frequent requests and questions by women in relation to sexuality. The second has to do with the way in which the APFCIB usually addresses these. Let's go by parts.

The training sessions constitute spaces where we seek to offer a very broad vision of sexuality where all experiences, emotions and thoughts are accommodated within a framework of rights. It often happens that we encounter **specific questions related to pleasure**. These are usually: "I want to enjoy it", "I want to have a good time", "I want to have orgasms". What we do, how we do it and who we do it with is very important, but it is not enough. Here, faced with a question that focuses on pleasure, we start a conversation with all group participants in relation to what we understand by pleasure and the need for self-knowledge. Sometimes, this conversation is generated from a specific dynamic to discover sensitive zones in the body and ways of self-exploration, but other times the conversation simply starts without the need to present any dynamic to get it going. During this conversation, the women sort through the information they are given in accordance with its use for their lives, trying to find the best answer for them – a response that, clearly, may be different in each case.

It is not easy to talk about one's own sexuality, and neither is it easy to be aware that by "coming out" of a situation that you don't like or in which you have never felt good, sometimes you need to change things and maybe sometimes some of these things are difficult to change... When we talk about this *best response* for the women, we are referring to that which can be coped with at that moment, that which leads me to a place where I feel safe. Maybe I won't get to where I want to get to, but I am getting there making stops in safe places. If at any moment I feel that the explanation I give to my doubts, anxieties, conflicts and problems relating to my sexuality now no longer serves me, I will seek new explanations, new paths: I will continue on the journey.

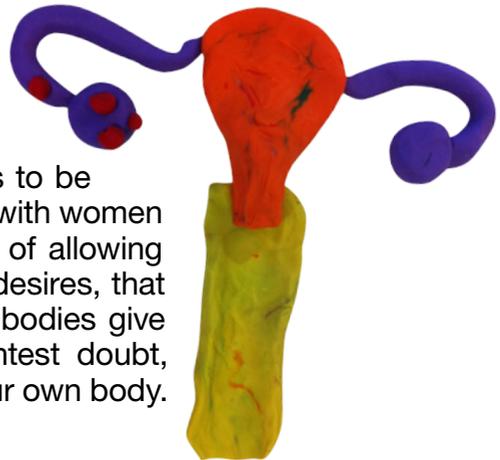
We try to work on these ideas **offering as many tools as necessary so that it is the women themselves who make the decisions that seem best for them at that particular time in their lives.** This seems to us a good way of working, not only because as an organisation we feel comfortable like this, but also because we believe that every woman has to do what she wants with whatever we offer her, because only she knows what is good for her and what isn't and, even though at times the choices may take them somewhere that hurts, only she has all the information on her life, only she can know what she can cope with now. We are only passing through.

On the other hand, whilst one of the most frequent questions in the workshops has to do with pleasure, it is also true that the women usually ask for lots of information on their menstrual cycle to know when they are most likely to fall pregnant in the event of having heterosexual sexual relations without the use of any contraceptive method. Therefore, the interest in addressing sexuality from its most reproductive aspect also plays a special role in the workshops owing to the desire for motherhood (or the absence of this) by some of the participants. This means that,



whether it be from an aspect that focuses more on pleasure or on a more reproductive one, the fact is that we find that the woman want to know themselves more, to know their bodies more and to know how they work. They ask for autonomy, agency to give themselves pleasure or to indicate where and how they want to be stimulated by another person, agency to control their menstrual cycle and with this, the possibility of falling pregnant when they want, if they want. With respect to this, we wish to underline that the work we have done with the women in the area of sexuality continues to have as a central feature **self-knowledge and appropriation of their own bodies, pleasures and desires**.

Our colleagues who in the '70s were already fighting for women's rights, some of them founders of this association, on reading this would surely say to us how can it be that even now we are still carrying out what is a classic workshop structure of the '70s? The answer is that, even with the achievement of important rights thanks to the feminist struggle, there is still a long way to go, although at a formal level parameters have been established such as sexual and reproductive rights that should facilitate this achievement, that is ultimately unequal and skewed by social class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc. The patriarchal system continues dictating in what way women should live our sexuality and assumes that pleasure does not correspond equally to men and women. Whilst this continues to be the case, workshops on sexuality with women will continue having the objective of allowing women to connect with our own desires, that we stop fearing the pleasure our bodies give us and believe, without the slightest doubt, that it is only we who decide on our own body.



Difficulties encountered in the intervention process and reflections on these

Working in groups presents several difficulties relating to the intervention methodology itself, but in this section primarily we want to highlight the difficulties directly linked to the characteristics of groups in prisons.

In this respect, in this section we wish to point out some of the difficulties encountered during the intervention in the prisons which have represented challenges and have consequently led to changes in how the project was executed. We can summarise these difficulties in three concepts: those that refer to the process of constituting the group; those that have to do with the involvement of the workshop participants; and finally, the difficulties in making the workshop the safe space it needs to be. In the following we develop each one of these points.

1. Constitution of the group

One of the aspects we wish to highlight is the **voluntary participation in the workshop**. As we have said, the interventions carried out in Wad-Ras and Brians 1 were different in this respect. In the Wad-Ras prison, the women voluntarily joined up to the course, whilst in the Brians 1 prison, the training sessions formed part of their activities plan and was compulsory for all the women who were in the DAE. This fact made the women at Wad-Ras have more “freedom” on whether to attend the sessions or not. A freedom that they made use of and that resulted in a broad **variability in the group, the product of intermittent attendance² or the incorporation of new participants at each session**. In this respect, over the five sessions of the workshop we found ourselves with the difficulty of not having a stable group even though the interest shown by the women was notable. This aspect did not permit us to develop continuous work with the group and the sessions presented and, therefore, required that these sessions were also designed independently from each other. This meant whoever attended all the sessions saw the continuity, but whoever could not or did not want to attend all the sessions noted how in one session a specific content was started and finished.

2. Connecting and not connecting with the workshop

We have to note, continuing with the difficulties relating to group characteristics in the prisons, at Brians, as we have already said, the intervention was carried out with women from the DAE (Specialised Care Unit), where care is offered to women with drug-related problems. In this respect, it often happened that in the group we found women who as part of their treatment were taking heavy medication that affected their **ability for atten-**

² - Attendance at the workshops ran alongside duties, such as shifts in the library, kitchen, etc., and also visits from lawyers, medical visits, etc.

tion and concentration. This circumstance was addressed by redesigning the workshop sessions so that we involved movement (especially at the start of the workshop) to motivate and energise the women so they would “enter” into the workshop. The rhythm of the women undergoing treatment also had to be respected, who in spite of expressing difficulties to participate, indicated that they could follow the workshop in a more passive way, listening to the interventions.

3. The workshop as a safe space

Another aspect that we want to mention is that concerning the **relational dynamics of the group.** Whilst at Wad-Ras prison we had groups that already had certain relational dynamics that were able to interfere in the development of the workshop, it was in the DAE where this took on much more protagonism, as coexistence there is very intense and the compulsory nature of the participation in the workshop left no room to manage potential conflicts caused by non-participation in this space. Whether in one prison or another, we found that the women who participated were women who were living together in the same space 24 hours a day and where the affinities and difficulties in their relationships were accentuated. This reality made the fact of speaking about sexuality and, to a certain degree, showing the group how you think about it and live it, was not always a well-received proposition. There were groups where all the women said they felt very safe, and groups where we found women who didn't feel comfortable and demonstrated more defensive attitudes. Talking about sexuality with colleagues with whom you spend 24 hours a day is risky, and that phrase that the professionals often say with respect to “what is talked about in the workshops stays in the workshops” needed reviewing at every session. A review that the women themselves had to do, because only each one knew if it was possible or not to feel safe and, depending on this, decide how far to expose her feelings. But it is also a review that the people leading the

workshop have to make, as it is also our responsibility to watch over this space of safety.

From the first workshop session, this difficulty was worked on with the group, asking that there should be a commitment to caring and to constructing the workshop as a safe space of learning between everyone. And it was also worked on at an individual level, explicitly explaining that the women could come to and go from the activities we proposed whenever they wanted and noted that staying in a place where they felt some sort of violence towards them, for whatever reason, was not a good experience and therefore leaving was an option that would be fully respected. Even so, as we were saying, it is also necessary for the professionals to be aware of and manage certain situations of violence that may occur towards any of the participants – situations such as excluding someone, ganging up to ostracise, belittling the interventions of some participants, etc. These are situations that are bound to also take place outside the workshop space, but that we try to ensure do not happen inside it, seeking a joint commitment to ensure this objective, as it represents the collective and individual wellbeing.

Even so, in those sessions where this was not able to be guaranteed, owing to tensions and/or conflicts that were difficult to manage by the group and the professionals, it was decided to work in smaller groups, reduce the time of the group workshop and to increase the time of the individual sessions. In this respect, once more it was the change in the work methodology that permitted us to continue working on the content in an interesting and safe way for the group.

Ultimately, and with regard to the difficulties encountered during the development of the project, we can say that, whilst there were no major changes in the initial concept of the project, there were changes in the dynamics used for working on the

content. For example, we used dynamics where the personal work of the women did not involve exposure that was too intimate in front of the group, work dynamics in small groups to facilitate participation and break with dynamics of conflict, and also using short dynamics, bodily dynamics, etc. In light of this, we can say that each workshop “was a world of its own”. And whilst these changes from session to session represented a major extra workload for the team in the way in which it was necessary to make a continuous assessment and redesign of the intervention, we also believe that with each change the intervention improved qualitatively, it enriched the workshop with regard to the diversity of group dynamics to work on the proposed content and, as an overall consequence, we all enjoyed the space more.

Doubts arising as a result of the intervention and strategies for tackling them

The professionals carrying out the project in women's prisons have spent time reflecting on some of the issues that for us became significant contradictions with respect to the general objectives of the project. Contradictions that were present to a greater or lesser degree depending on the time, the group, etc., but that in so far as they were difficult to resolve (or at least we still haven't been able to resolve them), our strategy up to this point has been to learn to live with them.

1. Intervention in a prison: what are we doing here?

The context in which the project is developed is in itself an element that contradicts many discourses on sexual and reproductive rights. Prisons are institutions that are profoundly unequal, where violence is not an isolated incident in as much as the very fact of being deprived of liberty implies violence. This reality has led us to ask to what point realising the project

objectives can be achieved beyond the discourse? Is it possible to put the project objectives into practice in a context with these characteristics?

Up until now, these reflections had remained as a background noise during the development of our interventions. Even so, in one of the last training sessions, and thanks to a group of women who were highly participative and involved in the workshop content, we are proposing to open up this contradiction to the group of women itself in future interventions, as they are the only ones who know the possibilities they have to be able to exercise their rights in prisons.

Another of the contradictions is related to the possibility of change on those aspects of sexuality where the women expressed they did not feel good. Working with the possibility of change means working with enthusiasm, with motivation, with the confidence that whatever we are experiencing can always be better, that life can be better. Obviously, the success of this proposal not only depends on the objectives of the project and of the persons who carry it out. We work in a hostile environment with a highly vulnerable population. Talking about sexuality is to connect with life, with pleasure, with wellbeing. Is it possible to connect with this in prison? To us, at certain moments, it seemed an impossible task. In this regard, the doubts we feel are: are the women pretending to be OK in the workshop to “please” the educational figures that we represent? Do they really like what we are doing? Can we really go there and visit and talk about how fantastic life and sexuality can be? Is this a good starting point to talk about it? Yes, no, sometimes? Our strategy now has been to stop. We don’t want to do it from this point, we don’t feel comfortable. We think that the project has to continue and keep changing, and one aspect that seems to be fundamental to us is working much more based on dialogue with the women who are participating. For us it is important that

they talk to us, that they explain to us how they live and how they are with respect to these matters and from there, to offer them what we can. It is not about providing group or individual therapy: it is about asking the women, during the sessions, if what we are saying is valid or not, because it is possible that sometimes we say things that are out of place because of our lack of knowledge about certain ways of internal workings and that they don't tell us out of politeness or for some other reason that we are not aware of. We do not want to fill the space with things that have no meaning, and only each specific group can validate what we do and ask us for what they want.

Conclusions

1. Evaluations of the intervention

We evaluate the intervention we make very positively. Firstly, because we consider interventions like this are essential to see the positive, remove blame and promote the sexual re-appropriation of women. Based on our experience of working with groups of women we can affirm that the fact of acquiring knowledge on sexual and reproductive health makes women put themselves in a different place with regard to their sexuality, feeling more empowered to experience it as sole owners and wholly responsible for it.

Secondly, because we consider it essential to carry out this type of workshop in prisons, as these are often forgotten spaces. But these are spaces where the persons have to be able to continue exercising their rights and for this reason we need to contribute to make this happen, and this is why we consider it fundamental to carry out these interventions, which should be more frequent and form part of the lines of work in prisons. In the case of Brians 1, they have shown their desire to continue with the project, something that is now a reality given that there is an agreement to do two interventions a year.

On the other hand, the women also value the workshop highly:

“me gustaba de la simpatía de vosotras, las maneras que más enseñar la manera de nos prevenir”

(I really liked how friendly you were, the ways you showed me to defend ourselves)

“Vuelvan otra vez, muchas gracias por el taller”

(Come back again, many thanks for the workshop)

“Que volte sempre pois este taller eres muy bueno”

(Come back again whenever you can yeah this workshop is really great)

“Que volte senpere para aprovechá”

(Come again! Loved it!)

And they point out which are the most interesting topics:

“Del tema de los anticonceptivos, y las relaciones entre parejas”

(The topic about contraceptives, and relations between couples)

“Ver como son los genitales”

(Seeing what genitals are like)

“Hablar de placer”

(Talking about pleasure)

2. The relationship between the team and the group

An aspect we think is important to highlight as a conclusion to this experience is the need for the intervention team to be formed of two people and that these need to be totally flexible

to any changes that may arise, different to what had been planned. The content one way or another comes out, although the order in which it happens and the format is another thing.

We consider it is very important to be flexible as it is not about imposing a certain amount of time and ways of doing things. It is not about reproducing certain forms of authority. The workshop space needs to be a space where the want itself can appear, and for this to appear what is definitely necessary is that this is the most “free” space possible.

Facilitating a “free” space in prison, as happens in other places, is to offer a space to also express discontent, whether it is towards what is being worked on, towards another specific person, towards nothing, or towards everything in general. In this respect, interventions in prisons also involve supporting that which in principle may be presented as a “chaos” and trying to attend all these points of discontentment that may arise with phrases such as, *“I don’t do that”*, *“I’m overwhelmed”*, *“What you’re saying isn’t true”*, *“I’m sorry, but I’m off”*, *“I don’t want to speak”*, etc.

If the groups of women don’t do what we propose, that is, that they take over the space as they want, this for us implies success in the project. Are we prepared for this space to become a place where we didn’t plan what is happening there? Can this “freedom” being exercised inconvenience the team itself?

Faced with these questions, and also in relation to everything we have spoken about previously, up to this point we have reached a conclusion and discovered a new question. The conclusion is that this is very much a living project that, session after session, is deconstructed and reinvented, a project that enriches but that also exhausts, and therefore, a project where

it is necessary to pay sufficient care and attention to everyone involved. To all persons: to the group of women and also the team.

And it is in the reflection with respect to care and attention where the new question emerges that, like so many others, we still have not been able to solve in practice: what is the distance between the group of women and the team? What ways of doing things distance us or bring us closer? If the care and attention of the group is the responsibility of everyone, can we also talk to the women about the care of the team? And if we agree that we can, up to what point?

As we have already mentioned, our work experience has made us reflect on the need to establish a deeper dialogue with the women in respect to what we can offer and its use/viability in their lives. It has also led us to abandon any pretension of doing a workshop with things set out clear and accept that many times we leave profoundly confused and on occasions, also frustrated. And finally, these last issues have shown us also that, in regard to future interventions, it could be useful that this joint task of learning and group care is done taking into account that in the group there is also the team, and that in the team there is also the group of women.

We also hope to be able to have other work experiences in prisons where we can work on this distancing ourselves/bringing ourselves closer and all the thoughts that we have mentioned on these pages. And we also hope to once again have the opportunity to write, hopefully with them, that which we have learned in a new number of this collection.

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TALLER DE SEXUALIDAD

¿Me gusta? ¿Me gusta mi **cuerpo**? ¿Qué pienso y cómo vivo mi **sexualidad**? ¿Qué pasa si no tengo ganas de tener **sexo**? ¿Es normal sentir dolor? ¿Cómo son mis relaciones de **pareja**? ¿Me siento bien? ¿Por qué me cuesta tanto dejar una relación que sé que me hace daño? ¿Tengo dudas o quiero saber más sobre la **regla, la menopausia, el embarazo, el cáncer de mama y útero, los orgasmos, las prácticas sexuales, enfermedades, embarazos, el aborto, la homosexualidad, bisexualidad y transexualidad**?



Si alguna vez te has hecho alguna de estas preguntas o tienes otras, **los martes de 17h a 19h ¡te esperamos!**

Hablaremos de todo esto y de mucho más, pero sobretodo aprenderemos riendo y jugando tanto como queramos.

Y si quieres hablar de algún tema que te preocupa en un **espacio individual**, ¡ven también!

