

CASE STUDY: YWCA Thebes – creating new approaches and campaigns

Women's leadership has made a positive difference and has helped other women overcome their personal barriers. There is a women's prison close to our town. A lot of the women imprisoned there are addicted to drugs or other addictions. Some of them are Greeks and some are foreigners.

This is where the YWCA of Thebes comes to picture. For over ten years we have been working closely with this Addiction Treatment Centre attending a lot of informative seminars and visiting the prison once a week. Actually we are considered to be a part of the therapy procedure.



Empowering women may bring a positive change in their lives and in our communities

An Addiction Treatment Center has organized a special detoxification community in this Prison in order to help these women to deal with and, if possible, overcome their addiction problems. This community offers a lot of educational programmes like learning Greek to foreigners or teaching them several skills that would be useful to them to get their lives in order when they are released. For the foreigners, the Greek language is necessary in order to be accepted in the detoxification community. This community is based not only on professional staff (social workers, psychologists) but also on volunteers.

Our volunteers offer their skills like teaching Greek to foreigners, or how to care about themselves (aesthetic), and make their own soap or plain jewellery. We also exchange cultures in a group where we all sit around the same table cooking and enjoying a dish that we have produced all together.

The members of these groups benefit a lot:

They don't feel marginalized

They don't lose contact with the outside world

They socialize with each other and the volunteers

They are empowered in a way that they will be ready to pick up their life where it was left

Rolling back into drugs and eventually back to Prison seems to be a remote possibility.

They acquire knowledge that will change their life to the better

This is not just a theory.
We have seen a lot of the above becoming a reality:

- Foreign women getting a Greek Language Degree (which is not easy)
- Young women continue their studies into Greek Universities
- Women who are released from prison to continue their lives keeping away from addictions.(359)

Personal barriers can be overcome by empowering and self esteem

Power of inclusion

Avoiding discrimination and marginalization can make a difference