

Moving Culture in collaboration with Altea Beach Lodges/Eco Camping

REPORT ON GRANT RECEIVED BY SOROS FOUNDATION

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PROJECT TITLE: Professional training and women employment in tourism in the Albanian Riviera.

Societies that don't involve women use only ½ of their brain.

A. Methodology used for project completion

Objective 1 – Professional training of women from village of Dhermi to be employed in the industry of tourism services

This project was completed on bases of a public-private partnership and supported by local government institutions of the Dhermi-Himara district. The program selected, interviewed and trained women from the village of Dhermi, in these positions:

- 1) Manager – 2 people Restaurant, Hotel;
- 2) Restaurant employee, Customer Service – 4 people;
- 3) Kitchen employee, Customer Service – 4 people;
- 4) Hotel employee, Supportive Care – 3 people;
- 5) Hotel employee, Customer Service – 3 people;
- 6) Bar-Beach employee, Customer Service – 3 people.¹

¹ According to the attached training list

In order to reach this objective the first step was establishing a partnership between *Moving Culture* and *Altea Beach Lodges Tourist Complex*, through signing a cooperation agreement in the beginning of June. This was followed by establishing contact for support from local government offices. Participation by all interest groups was ensured by promoting and marketing the project in the local level, through direct contact and posters, and in national level through a radio ad at Radio Club FM and internet advertising. Promotional support was used by creation and distribution of the video, audio, promotional and visual materials. In the period from June 15 – July 15, a total of 60 individual interviews were conducted with all women who showed interested or were invited to participate in the training program. Project leaders, Edit Pulaj and Denisa Zefi, conducted 30 individual interviews according to a planned schedule. The interviews were conducted at the premises of *Altea Beach Lodges Complex*. The other 30 women were approached and interviewed in their private homes, or while they were doing their daily chores of agricultural work. This way, a real knowledge was gained about the real situation and professional needs of women in the labor market in this village. The first 12 candidates were selected in the last two weeks of June, and the other 7 were selected in the first two weeks of July. Their training was conducted according to the action plan, manuals and module developed by the working staff. The training was done in groups for general briefings and later in individual bases in all selected sectors of the touristic complex (management, restaurant, maintenance etc.) This module will be further developed and used in the future in an effort to increase women's access to labor market along the coast.

Objective 2 - Employment of trained women and increase of family income

Equal access to labor market is one of the most effective ways to increase gender equality. Tourism industry in Albania in the past two decades has developed in bases of small family operators, generating income for the head of the family. Therefore, the largest number of women working in the sector are engaged in unpaid labor. This project, while training and employign women has increased their chances to generate income and gain professional skills and experience.

According to the plan of activities upon training a total of 19 women, 10 of them were employed in local family and touristic businesses in the village, whereas 9 of them, as agreed between *Moving Culture* and *Altea Beach Lodges*, were employed at the following positions:

- 1) Manager – 1 people Restaurant, Hotel;
- 2) Restaurant employee, Customer Service – 2 people;
- 3) Kitchen employee, Customer Service – 2 people;
- 4) Hotel employee, Supportive Care – 2 people;

- 5) Hotel employee, Customer Service – 1 people;
- 6) Bar-Beach employee, Customer Service – 1 people.²

Throughout their period of on-job training at the *Altea Beach Lodges*, the selected women signed a working contract and were registered at the labor office therefore gaining access to health insurance, social security, income tax etc.

Also, during the working months, *Altea Beach Lodges* took the responsibility of buying agricultural and traditional products (milk, dairy, fruits, vegetables, honey, teas etc) from the families of the women involved in the project in order to increase their family income and encourage the consumption of local products.

Objective 3 - Encouraging a quality service in the tourism sector in Dhermi as a way to increase competition of the local enterprises

Except for training and empowering women, one of the objectives of this intervention in the labor market in the coast of Dhermi was to increase quality of service in the tourism sector. Creating and implementing this kind of training and working program served as a way to involve women in the tourist sector.

On the other hand, the professional training given to them proved very successful as all participating women performed at their best in their selected on-work training position. This improved the overall quality of services within the hosting touristic complex which translated into an overall successful partnership since all parties involved benefited from the program. Moreover, the management of *Altea Beach Lodges* touristic complex offered to employ the same group of women and train others according to the need in the following summer season. This means that the training program is not only successful but also sustainable. This is reflected on all aspects of the project: the professional up skilling of women, their economic empowerment, their increased prospects for future work in the industry of tourism and the overall improvement of quality of services.

Objective 4 - Create a model that can be followed by other entrepreneurs of the field not only in Dhermi but at a broader level

In the last phase of the project, the final activity was a seminar organized by *Moving Culture*. With the support also of local government the seminar was promoted in the surrounding villages in the Dhermi-Himara district. The target groups were family and private entrepreneurs of the area. The seminar's purpose was to share the experience gained during the project and to encourage the local entrepreneurs to adopt the same model of on-job training of women but also of other disadvantaged groups in the community. The

² According to the attached training list

seminar took place within the premises of *Altea Beach Lodges*, and a large number of local entrepreneurs were invited to participate. The seminar took place in the last week of September and 25 participants from family and private business from the area of Dhermi joined the seminar. The village leader and official representatives from the municipalities of Himara and Orikum also joined. *Moving Culture's* project leaders presented the project and its outcomes and gave recommendations on the possibility of expanding this program and have other entrepreneurs implement it. The seminar concluded with a fruitful discussion from all participants about specific problems and challenges in the sector of rural tourism and the possibility of implementing the same training and employing women as the one that was just successfully implemented by *Moving Culture* in partnership with *Altea Beach Lodges* touristic complex.

B. Project Results and Success Indicators

There are multiple success indicators. The main goal of this project was to build capacities and create new job positions for women in rural tourism, as an effective way to build their self-confidence, and increase their chances to compete in the labor market in the future. Both, the high professional level gained by participating women and the economically sustainable nature of the initiated project indicate success.

Thus, the direct results of the project was the professional training of 19 women to be employed in the tourism industry and the economic empowerment of 9 women and their families. The gained experience and skills during training will increase their chances to work in the tourism industry and improve their social and economic status, and also reduce dependency from other family members and from emigration remittances.

Based on evaluations and feedback from the participating women, from *Moving Culture* trainers and from management of *Altea Beach Lodges*, the project proved to be successful. Most importantly, a network was established between women and local businesses, and it increased the motivation of all actors for future collaboration. It is expected that some of the trained women will continue to be employed in the service sector, taking into account that some of the hotels and restaurant need maintenance even during off season, whereas the remaining trained women will be reemployed during the summer season. Therefore, establishing and putting into function a database of professional capacities, as well as establishing long-term relationship with local businesses and government officials will ensure the continuation of this form of employment through training.

After the training was concluded the project managed to employ 9 women within *Altea Beach Lodges* and 10 others in local family businesses. Throughout the project, it was evident that all participating women were highly motivated despite the potential social and

cultural constraints that they may face in their everyday life. The main reasons for these constraints originate from rigid family relationships where women continue to have a secondary role, and also from the close-mindedness of the businesses that are based only on private initiatives, and are not exposed to alternative methods of training and employment. *Moving Culture's* project was a new model introduced to the community. This project proved to be an efficient way to improve women's access to labor market in rural tourism, but in order for it to be sustainable and to grow it needs institutional and structural support.

On the other hand, this project aimed to improve quality of services. In this context, based on feedback from the participating women and the employer, all parties were satisfied. The potential of transferring the gained skills into family businesses and other work places in the future, guarantees the long-term effectiveness of this train and work program. Improving quality of services in rural tourism benefits the tourist operators, local communities and enriches livelihoods.

Annex 1: Pictures during Training and Activities



Picture 1: Group discussions during training



Picture 2: Trained employee working in hotel management



Picture 3: Trained employee working in hotel kitchen restaurant



Picture 4: Trained employee babysitting in the touristic complex