



New Gender Strategies for Women's Inclusion

# Storybook Belgium



Co-funded by  
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*Stories connect the  
remote but alive  
past with the  
distant but very  
much present  
future.*



Ledarach 2005



# INTRODUCTION

Storytelling has been proven to be one of the most effective and most common forms of communication people use in different areas of their lives, ranging from day-to-day communication and entertainment to education and language learning.

Storytelling, and methods revolving around it, support the development of language skills, enables people to create their own narratives about themselves, their lives and relationships.



The present storybook illustrates the stories who participated in THE WINGS social and labor inclusion program implemented in Belgium.

The programme was structured around 3 main areas, namely the language course, individual job counselling sessions and internship periods in selected companies to gain new practical work experience and apply newly acquired language skills. During the language course sessions, women happily shared their personal reflections about learning experiences and/or created new stories focusing on their future life with the support of artistic expression.

Advancing the method of storytelling and guided by experts, participants vividly portrayed their unique stories through collages of photos, images and drawings, which accompany their narrations.



The WINGS social and labour inclusion programme was implemented in the framework of the project **WINGS - New Gender Strategies for Women's inclusion**, a multi-layered action aiming to facilitate the social-economic inclusion of women in vulnerable situations. WINGS provides them with language courses, psychological support, tailored employment counselling and labour integration opportunities.



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I got the wonderful opportunity to witness the growing friendship between the members by hearing a Nigerian client asking a Ukrainian client to go on a workout together. This was after noticing that they had a shared interest in working out!

*Doreen, language teacher*

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During today's session I could clearly  
notice the changing of  
the group dynamics.

The ladies support each other and give  
each other the chance to open up about  
their struggles.

*Doreen, language teacher*

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A pink icon representing an opening quotation mark, consisting of two nested L-shaped brackets.

Today, being here,  
I felt loved.

*Participant*

A pink icon representing a closing quotation mark, consisting of two nested L-shaped brackets rotated 180 degrees.





This project is of benefit to me and to my life. But I'm disappointed about those who don't show up to class.

When you make a group,  
you expect people to show  
up and stick together.

*Participant*







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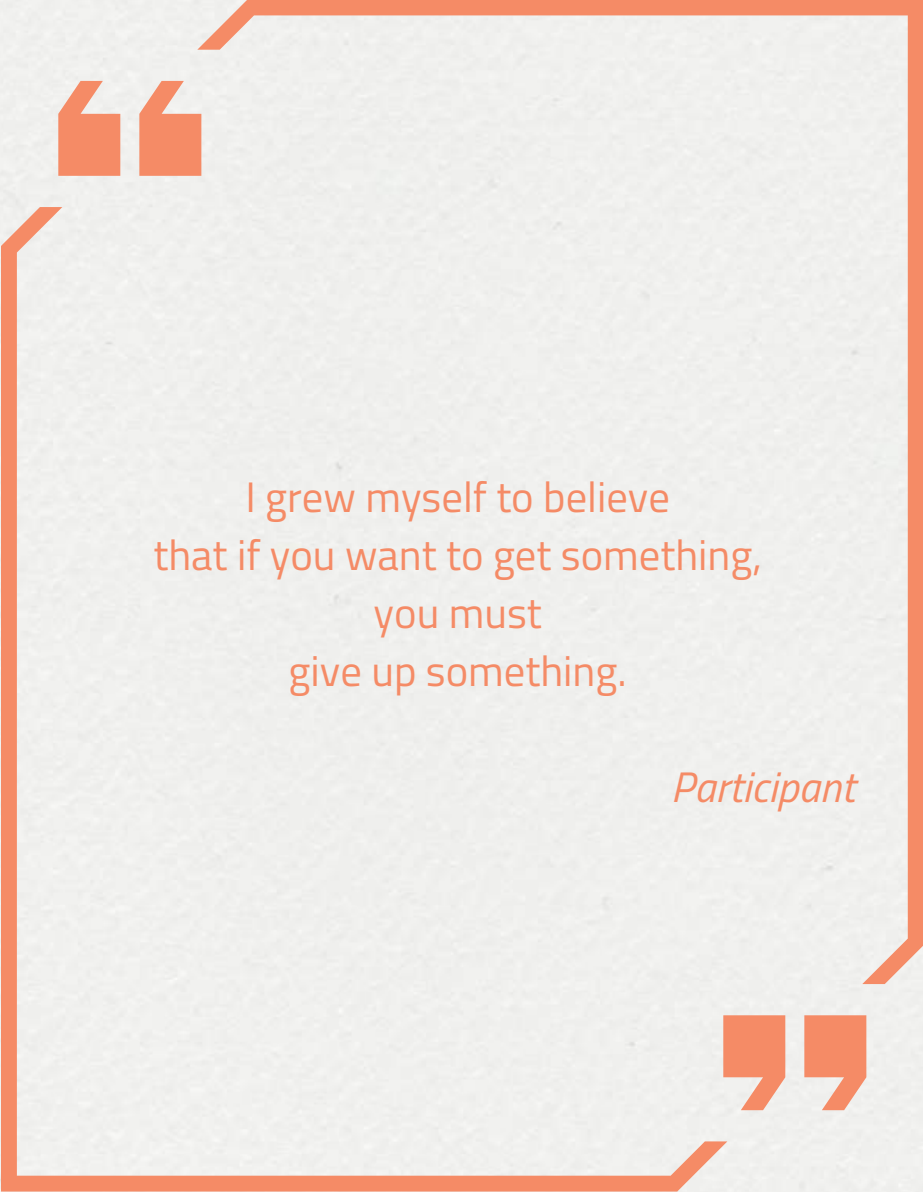

I don't have much time, but I make the time to go to the (WINGS) class, because I know that it's good for me. I made a commitment.

I like it and I attend classes every week.

*Participant*

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I grew myself to believe  
that if you want to get something,  
you must  
give up something.

*Participant*







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Participants became more confident  
in speaking Dutch.

The environment made them feel safe to  
experiment and make mistakes.

*Laxmi, psychologist*

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» betaalt bij de dokter, kiest die stukje zelf. Maar de tarieven voor 'org' worden ook vastgelegd. Dat fondsen en dokters samen.

**GECONVENTIONEERD IS GOED**  
Want er zijn nu ziektekostenfondsen die 'conventies' hebben bereikt, in feite akkoord al dan niet te onderbreken: conventioneering.

3 MONTHS - 3 YEARS

**ELLE**



**STEEL**



“

I really enjoyed the class on how to present oneself during a job interview. Having never had a job interview, I can imagine that it is very stressful and without this workshop, I would probably never have trained myself for it. Knowing how to present yourself is very important.

This was a very valuable lesson for me.

*Participant*

”







It's true that I didn't come to class that often; motivation is always a problem for me. It's hard for me to attend these workshops all the time. I often feel out of energy for these activities, for reasons I cannot explain.

Although I know I must push myself harder to improve my situation, it's not always possible. The times I was present were very enjoyable for me.

The trainers were really motivating.

Participant





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It's great to spend time with my family, but I feel like I have no one else besides them. These kinds of workshops open my eyes in a whole new way. We can learn from one another because we are in the same situation. Even though I am shy in a group setting and don't open up much, it has been a very valuable experience for me."

Participant

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Festival  
gebasee  
het publiek  
No worries  
Voor je out  
Tickets vanaf €

Even  
moment

Dream  
BIG

on passion I cannot dream of  
The don't support each other and  
speak up about their story



Voor jou, m

Home,  
sweet  
home



Work



nder



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Initially, trying to talk in Dutch in a group was difficult, but after a while it became easier. It was great to have a safe space where we could practice Dutch, because that is really missing in my life right now. I don't have the time or space to speak Dutch.

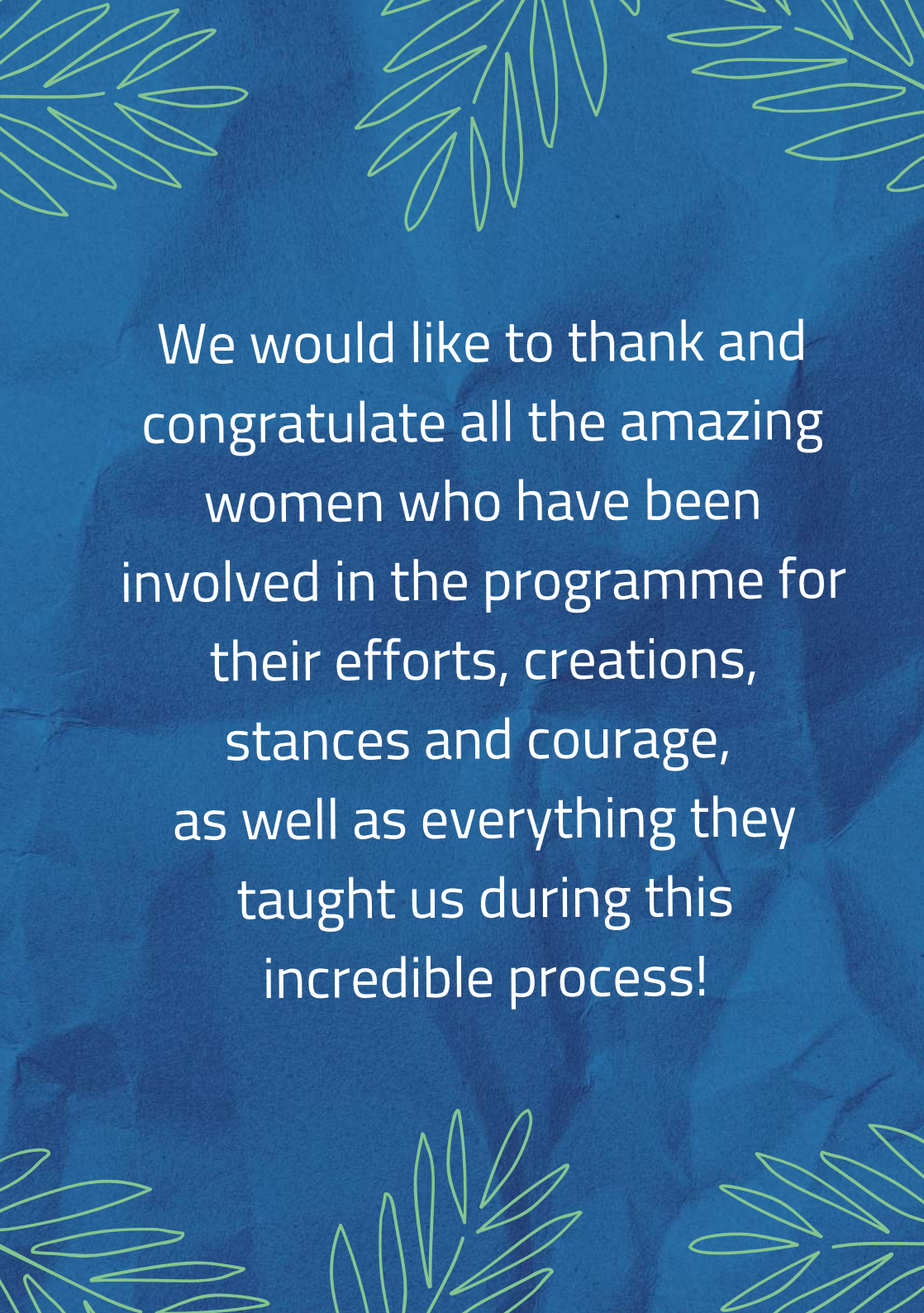
Participant

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# CLOSING REMARKS

The WINGS programme, including the sharing, structuring and creation of the stories has been a valuable lesson for both the women and the experts involved. Women practiced their newly-acquired language and presentation skills, practiced vocabulary and dreamt about the future.

The experts who supported the participants throughout this journey got the chance to appreciate the importance of telling stories to themselves and their dreams, to communicate, understand and empower each other and create networks of relationships.



We would like to thank and  
congratulate all the amazing  
women who have been  
involved in the programme for  
their efforts, creations,  
stances and courage,  
as well as everything they  
taught us during this  
incredible process!





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The WINGS project (project no. 101038321 — WINGS — AMIF-2020-AG) was co-funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. The content of this invitation represents the views of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.