



New Gender Strategies for Women's Inclusion

Storybook

Spain



Co-funded by
the European Union



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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 humans to create their own narratives, their own identities and, consequently, over their own lives and relationships with others.



The present storybook illustrates the stories of inspiring women who have participated in WINGS social and labour inclusion programme which was implemented in Spain.

The programme was structured around 3 main areas, namely the language course, group 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.

METODOLOGÍA

The art therapist proposed two projects that were used to create the textile works: "The Heroine's Journey" and "Ariadne's thread". Both were proposed to the participants to describe their current learning processes, inscribed in their personal histories. Some participants used textiles and embroidery techniques, while the others additionally used cardboard, with pens and organic and non-organic materials.

The first proposal is based on "The Hero's Journey", described by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) as a monomyth, a metaphor that unifies all tales, myths, and stories.

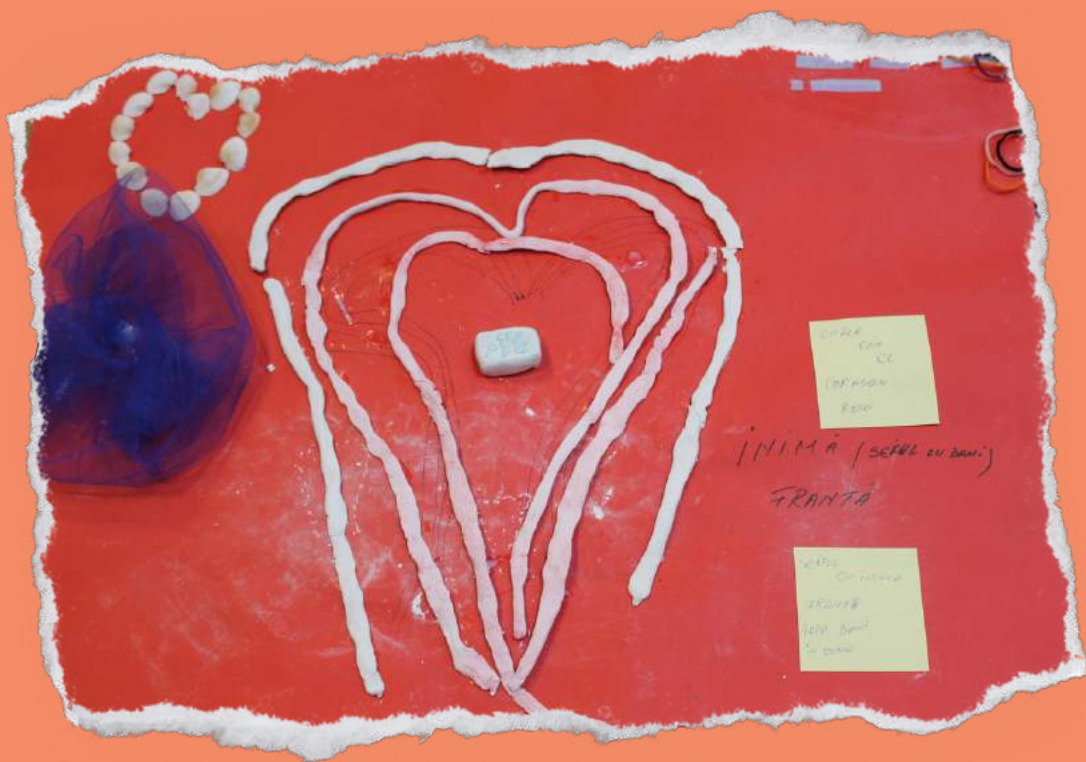
As Campbell explained, this widely shared narrative structure includes all the steps that the hero or heroine take to travel from the world of the known to the unknown and back to the known.

In the workshops, participants had the freedom to share personal or fictional stories without feeling obligated to disclose any parts of their lives that made them uncomfortable or that they preferred to keep private. The texts collected were written individually by each woman and describe the story each one wanted to tell in their artwork.

The second proposal is based on the Greek myth of Ariadne and her use of a thread to get out of the Labyrinth. The expression "Ariadne's thread" is sometimes used to refer to a series of arguments, observations, and deductions that lead us to the solution of a problem.

The women used the labyrinth as a metaphor to represent the problems they wanted to solve in their lives and their personal stories. Throughout this process, the thread is the central point of this creative universe as part of a relevant act of communication.

The texts were written as a joint process of creation among participants using some key words proposed by themselves.



“

Making with a broken Heart
Love and life from the power of hope

”



“

Living life
Love found the way out
Never lose hope
Detachment
Leave the past behind
Harvest strength, love and work.

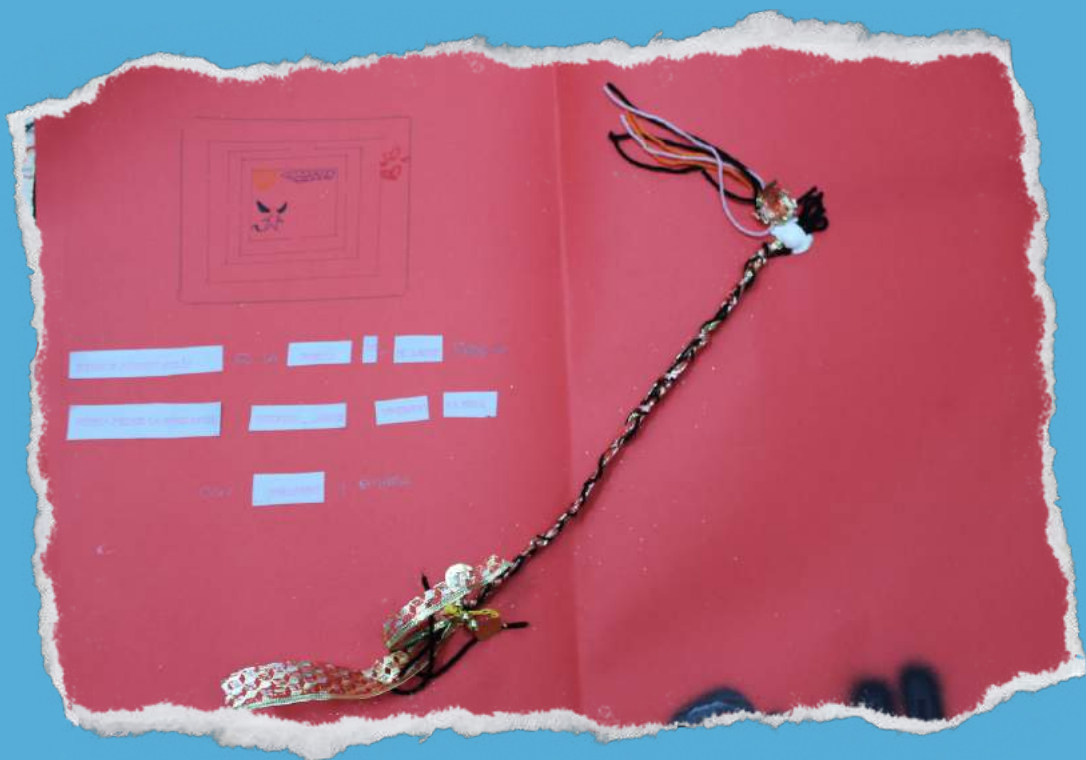
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“

A circle of mood
Never lose hope
Harvest of love and work
Strength

”



“

Leaving the past behind is the strength
of self-love.

Never lose hope, harvest love living life
With detachment and empathy

”



“

Cage

”

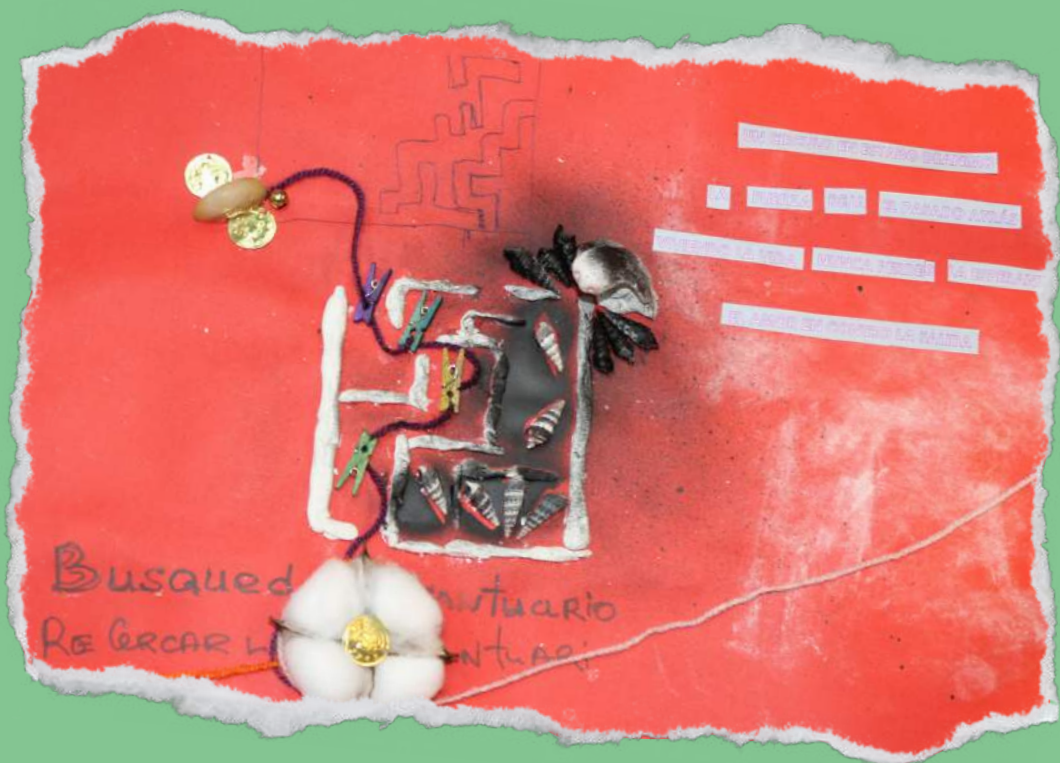


“

A circle in a state
Harvest of love and work
Love found the way out
Never lose hope
Strength

Living life
The bad past
Leave behind

”



“

A circle of mood
Strength leaves the past behind
Living life, you never lose hope
Love found the way out

”



“

A circle of mood
Found
The hope
Living life

”



“

Leave the past behind
Harvest love
Live life with love
And hope

”



“

Labyrinth of challenges

”

“

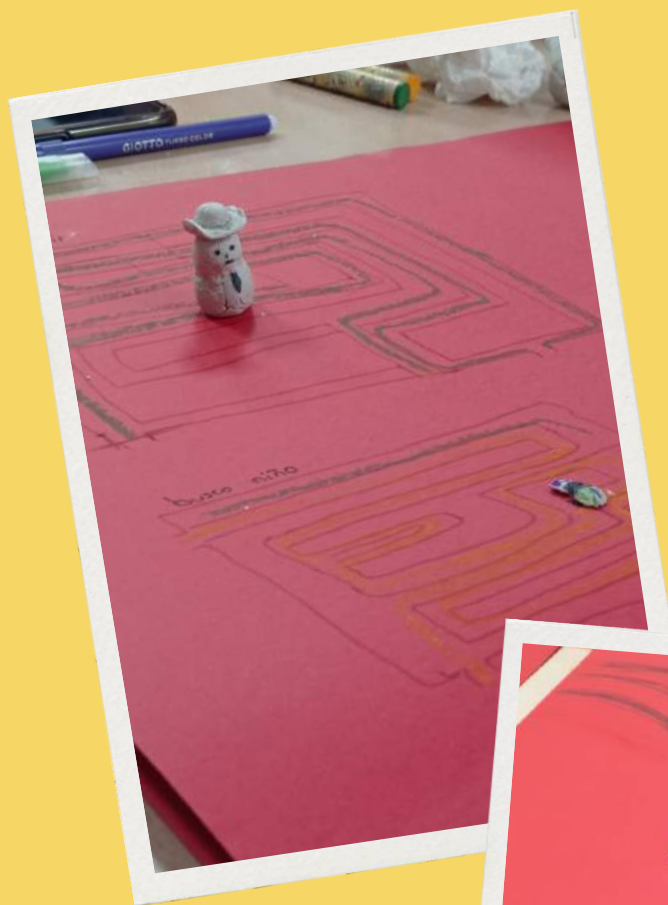
Manuela is 25 years old and lives in Madrid, without children or husband. She is a strong, beautiful, tall, blonde woman, full of curves.

She lives with her parents and siblings. She walks the streets of Madrid sad after breaking up with her boyfriend, she didn't want to leave him...

So she enters the church and starts praying. She finds it a way not to be sad, but her friend criticizes her because she doesn't see the point. Manuela prefers to stop seeing her friend, but to continue praying. And this way she feels that she is born again, after being arrested by God, stronger and with wonderful brothers and sisters around her.

”





“

At first, she didn't want to learn Catalan because it was too difficult for her. But she gave it a try anyway. Although it was an effort to spend money on transportation, she began to like it and stayed until the end of the course. In addition to learning Catalan, she enjoyed the artistic part of the course.

Her artwork represents her love for her family: a tree with many roots and a big heart.

What she found most difficult to accept in her life was the birth of her daughter. It was scary and dangerous to her health, and also a very hard experience...but finally this little girl who was born at 6 months is healthy and has a happy life.

When she looks at her, she is very happy, full of illusion. Her daughter... her great heroine!

”





Red Butterfly is a woman who comes to Spain at her mother's request.

Here she finds a normal life (friends, work, fun) until a few years later the difficulties begin.

She meets a person who absorbs her whole world. When she starts having children with him, the problems begin, and when she has the third one and sees that nothing changes, she realizes that there is a big problem.

After putting up with it for a while, the mother of her aggressive partner suggests she should act. So, she begins to look for solutions: she denounces him, separates, looks for help to live.

She is guided to Sirga's house, a safe place where she can learn everything from scratch. But after leaving the house she finds herself alone, without support and she goes back to living with her partner. Red Butterfly suffers violence again and it seems that history repeats itself.

But luckily her mother finds a house and they move in together with her four children.

There she begins to apply everything she learned at Sirga's house: legal issues, support, education. She realizes how strong she is and her ability to face any change in life. She realizes the treasure she has: her mother and her children.









This is the story of a mother and daughter traveling far from Africa. Julie is a very good student, who is learning a lot. A real heroine, with no enemies.

She is achieving all her goals. Her mother is very proud to see that she is now ready to create a good life for herself and that she is learning to be strong enough to live on her own.

They prepare a new journey together. This time the journey is a reward: having achieved her goals!







“

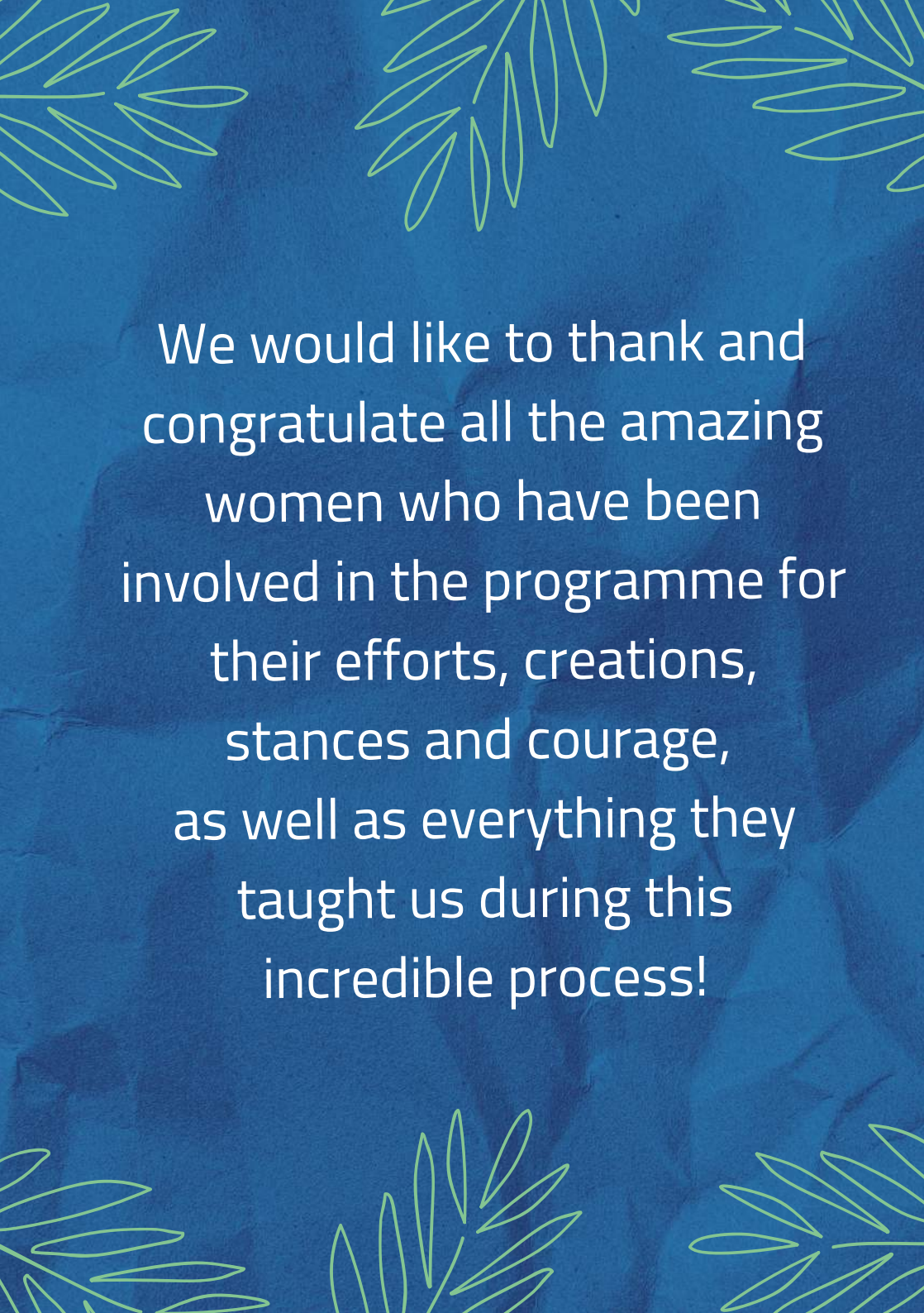
Your hand
Always
Will lead you
To your destination

”

CLOSING REMARKS

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, exercised on vocabulary and dreamt about the future.

The experts who supported the participants throughout this journey got the chance to better grasp and appreciate the importance of telling stories to express ourselves 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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