

Handbook for Women's Resource Centres

Introduction



PHOTO: LANI NOREKE

What are Women's Resource Centres?

The Function of a Women's Resource Centre

By women for women

Equality between women and men

This is a chapter of the Handbook for Women's Resource Centres. The complete Handbook is published on the website www.winnet.se

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Introduction

Svenska Riksförbundet Nationellt ResursCentrum för kvinnor, NRC (the Swedish National Resource Centre for Women) was founded on 16th December 1999. In 2010, NRC changed its name to Winnet Sverige. During its entire existence Winnet Sverige has organised training courses in running Women's Resource Centres for women active in these associations. The aim of the training is to increase knowledge about how to start, run and develop a Resource Centre.

Winnet Sverige emphasises the role of Resource Centres as actors in regional growth and development. The training courses provide knowledge about what is needed to start and run, and above all develop, a local and/or regional Resource Centre for Women with the emphasis on its role as a driving force for women's active participation in local and regional growth and development.

Women's participation in local and regional development should take place on equal terms and with the same conditions as apply for men.

Knowledge and experience from the training courses were collated into a Handbook on how to start and run a WRC for women in Sweden. At the same time we wanted to link this to the European perspective. The Handbook was published in 2006, and contained a great deal of information about and examples of experience of:

- making women's knowledge and competence visible
- marketing arguments and rhetoric concerning work in Resource Centres for Women
- women's rights to definition regarding what should and can be developed in a region

- how a region gains competitive power when both women and men are active in its development
- how actions lead to sustainable and equal growth and development
- how the rhetoric can be used to create legitimacy for Resource Centres for Women.

It is with pride and an awareness of the Resource Centre organisation's power and creativity that Winnet Sverige can see that Resource Centres for women have become a hub in the democratic dialogue for the building up of a society that has competitive power. Resource Centres for Women have in various ways, through collaboration with regional and local actors, and with men who sympathise with the fight for equality, changed a one-sided growth to a two-sided approach for equal and sustainable growth.

The ideas about WRCs have spread to Europe and out across the world. There is a great need of and demand for a Handbook in English. This Handbook in English is built up in chapters that in the first place are designed to be disseminated via Internet and should be available on Winnet Sveriges and Winnet Europe's websites. The Handbook can thus be updated and added to as and when necessary and the chapters can be published in new versions when needed.

Empowerment, the individual's own power, belief in knowledge, and the power to influence their own situation in society, are the key characteristics of the work that goes on in Resource Centres for Women.

The Handbook is designed to aid the establishment of Resource Centres for Women.

Use it! We wish you success!

Gävle August 2011

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Winnet Sverige and Winnet Europe

www.winnetsverige.se www.winnetreurope.org

What are Women's Resource Centres?

The model of Resource Centres for Women is the most effective base for engaging women in sustainable regional and local development.

The primary task and mission of Women's Resource Centres is to increase the number of women participating in economic development and growth on both regional and local levels.

A fundamental principle of Women's Resource Centres is that they should develop on the basis of local needs and conditions.

The Function of a Women's Resource Centre is:

- To empower women
- To be a neutral meeting place for networking groups of women
- To be a centre for information and documentation
- To give women advice (counselling and mentorship) as to the way of proceeding with their projects or business ideas
- To mediate contacts with women's networks

Running a Women's Resource Centre is based on five key categories of criteria which at the same time can form the basis for the quality certification of WRCs:

1. Legitimacy
2. Continuity
3. Organisation
4. Competences
5. Financing

By women for women

Work in a Women's Resource Centre makes use of the driving forces women possess and takes a grassroots perspective as its starting point. It provides women with the opportunity to design activities based on women's needs, resulting in activities designed by women for women. A Women's Resource Centre gives women a chance to use their knowledge and competence and represent women's interests in regional and local development work.

In all work in a WRC the principles – grassroots perspective, empowerment, management by demand, and respect for the individual and the individual's needs and wishes – that are fundamental to a WRC, have to be kept in mind.

Equality between women and men

In order for a country to grow and develop it is essential to utilise the entire population's knowledge and competence. This means that all individuals, both men and women, are allowed the possibility to develop their talents within those particular areas where they have the best prerequisites. Equality between women and men is therefore an important factor in ensuring a good life and growth in society.

Women's Resource Centres give women the possibility to use their knowledge and competence and represent women's interests in regional and local development work.

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Swedish National Federation
of Resource Centres for women

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