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FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

The Women's International Leadership Institute
(WILI)
Restaurant Management Training
Tucson, Arizona

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FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

I. BACKGROUND

In August 2001, The Women's International Leadership Institute (WILI) sponsored and brought to Tucson, Arizona, two women with disabilities from Oaxaca, Mexico, to participate in a program to personally and professionally prepare them for new career options in restaurant management. The overall purpose of WILI's month long, live in, experiential training program was to support the economic development of the two women who would like to participate in owning and managing a restaurant in the city of Oaxaca that would employ them and other women with disabilities. The specific training goal was to involve the women in daily, hands on activities in a well-established Tucson restaurant so they could acquire skills in all aspects of restaurant management that could be applied in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Both visually impaired, the two participants in the August-September program were Julia Garcia Velasquez, 38, single mother of three, and Maria del Pilar Fuentes, 45, single mother of two. Julia's visual disability allows her to see well only within a range of four meters, and Pilar's myopia restricts her vision to three meters. Both women completed "primaria," the equivalent of 6th grade in the United States.

The women lived in a hotel adjacent to Café Poca Cosa, one of the most famous restaurants in the Southwestern United States. They received their daily training from Suzana Dávila, entrepreneur, founder and owner of Café Poca Cosa. The curriculum included a spectrum of restaurant based activities from the basics of chopping vegetables, to marketing, budgeting, and understanding the intricacies of making customers feel comfortable. In addition to their daily training at Poca Cosa, they accompanied Suzana on her market excursions, worked with her in the kitchen, and received verbal guidance and lectures about the restaurant-related business practices. Secondary, but as important, was the informal time Suzana spent with the women guiding them in issues of self-esteem and motivation.

II. SCOPE

This evaluation was designed to assess the women's personal and professional experiences while living in Tucson and participating in training at the Poca Cosa, and not with the transition training scheduled in Oaxaca upon their return.

III. METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was both formative and summative. That is, the women were interviewed early on as well as at the end of the U.S. portion of the training. They were initially interviewed regarding their hopes, expectations and attitudes, and then later

interviewed in order to assess the degree of fulfillment of their expectations, the technical aspects of their restaurant training, the personal aspects of their living situation and their cultural adaptation. Interviews were conducted and data analyzed by Jan Elster, a female evaluator experienced in both formal and informal evaluation techniques, in various cross-cultural settings, and who is fluent in Spanish. In order to tailor the data-gathering methods to the needs and abilities of the women, and to insure their comfort given that their speaking skills were superior to their writing skills, interviews were conducted in an informal, conversational fashion in lieu of traditional, written surveys. This approach was also used to create a comfort level in which the women would be as candid as possible.

IV. FORMATIVE EVALUATION (Initial Interviews)

Note: Section IV (Formative Evaluation) and V (Summative Evaluation) will include observations, responses and quotes exactly as the two women offered them. Section VI (Conclusions and Recommendations) will be used to analyze these responses, draw conclusions and make recommendations based on the women's comments.

In their initial interviews, both women expressed excitement, curiosity and general "astonishment" at the opportunity to come to and study in the United States. They said they were enthusiastic about the WILI program because of employment and educational limitations they experienced, and they agreed that they had two main expectations for their time in Tucson:

- They hoped to receive training in restaurant management in order to create career opportunities for women with disabilities in Oaxaca
- They hoped to learn about Tucson

After being in Tucson for a few days, they had initial observations and conclusions about what impressed them the most:

- *"The mountains are so beautiful."*
- They compared Tucson to Oaxaca, saying, *"It is wonderful to see streets without trash."* *"The United States is so well organized."* *"There are beautiful, clean benches in the park and people take care of nature in the United States."*

In response to what they found surprising:

- *"The coin operated newspaper vending machines are amazing."*
- *"You can take the bus all day for \$2."*

In general conversation, they shared the following initial, general impressions of the hotel arrangements and people from the United States:

- *"Being in a hotel is great because it gives us freedom."*

- *“It is a little scary walking in the street.”*
- *“Everyone treats us well.”*
- *“People who are Mexican pretend they can’t speak Spanish.”*
- *“We’re so busy that we don’t miss our families.”*

V. SUMMATIVE EVALUATION (Final Interviews)

Achievement of Expectations

Both women felt that their first expectation and WILI’s main goal (to receive training in restaurant management in order to create career opportunities for women with disabilities in Oaxaca) was met. One said that the real proof would be in how they used the skills when they returned to Oaxaca.

They agreed that they had acquired skills in many aspects of restaurant management. The skills that impressed them as being the most useful in Oaxaca were:

- how to work in the business world: *“I have always been at home.”*
- the restaurant routine of opening and closing
- cutting vegetables, making soups and sauces
- cleaning
- how to refrigerate fresh food
- how to manage garbage
- how to attend to a customer by showing them a menu, making them feel at home and comfortable

Pilar stated: *“I think I can now get work in my own state. They’ve given us some manual skills we can use at home.”*

Both Julia and Pilar also felt that their second expectation (to learn about Tucson) was achieved through the various field trips they had in addition to some of the bus rides they took on their own. They talked in appreciative terms about the support they received from the WILI board members and volunteers who tended to them.

Lessons Learned

When asked about the most important things they learned or acquired as a result of the entire program, they responded:

Julia:

- *“I felt insecure about work because of my problems with my eyes. But yes, I can work!”*

- *“I loved the Saguaro National Part (West)– the roots of Tucson.”*
- *“I know about the United States from things I have read, but I’ve never really been here before this. Now I know so much more!”*

Pilar:

- *“Americans are different than Mexicans. We’re formal and timid. Coming here was such a change for me....so good for my future....knowing another culture, country and customs. I want to do something with my life. The training was so new to me. Having Suzana as my boss – what a new experience. I have never really worked. I’ve just been at home. I really learned about punctuality!”*

The Future

Julia felt strongly that with this training the women will “*earn the right to work*” in Oaxaca. Pilar commented that, “*Yes, we are trained now. And we’ll see our successes later.*”

Housing Arrangements

Although they initially liked it because of the independence it afforded them; both Julia and Pilar shared some discomfort with the hotel. They felt that it was not kept as clean as it should be. They also talked about other living situations that might work well such as a room with a family (as long as it provided privacy) or a Bed and Breakfast situation where they could be with a family at some point, but not actually living in their homes.

Cross-Cultural Adaptation/Language

Both women were able to recount experiences and observations they had as regards the culture/people of the United States and Mexico. Although asked to complete a journal of their experiences, neither Julia nor Pilar provided any written comments. Pilar expressed concern about her writing abilities and grammar. At their final interviews, neither expressed any symptoms of culture shock except that they missed their families toward the end of the training. When specifically asked about the concept of language training and cultural counseling, they agreed that they would like to have had a better command of the English language in order to move more comfortably around the community. They easily made a list in Spanish of the basics of what they would like to have been able to communicate in English. They were very open to the idea of a “cultural counselor,” and they said that two meetings a week with such a person could have been helpful.

Advice

When asked about any advice they would give other women with disabilities from Oaxaca who were about to enter the WILI program, they commented:

- Julia: *“Put your heart and soul into the training. Throw yourself into it. Nothing bad is going to happen. All is secure.”*
- Pilar: *“Take responsibility for yourself, and you will benefit from the training.”*

WILI

At the end of the interview, both women wanted to talk about the people who they felt were *“so nice, so available,”* and anyone else who had made it possible for them to participate in the program.

- Pilar: *“I thank the people who gave money for this program. The help is so important. I feel like a family with Cati, Glenda, Leticia and Suzana. These women have given me confidence.”*
- Julia: *“I thank WILI for worrying about women with disabilities. I can’t believe all the help for us women with special needs who aren’t American but Mexican. I am so grateful for the opportunity to know the United States.”*

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Hands on training in restaurant management

Conclusions: According to the women, they learned more than they expected about the technical and personal aspects and the self-discipline necessary to open, manage and operate a restaurant.

Recommendations: Because the women are challenged either visually or in their writing ability, it might be helpful to create an extremely easy-to-read manual or set of notes for them that highlight the most important guidelines for each aspect of restaurant management. Another option would be to have Suzana make an audiotape with “pearls” of restaurant management wisdom to remember. Either approach could be helpful for reinforcing their hands on learning in Tucson and to help them transfer their skills to Oaxaca. WILI might consider providing each participant with an inexpensive, portable tape recorder/player which could be used for Suzana’s tape, for taping their thoughts, important learning opportunities, and for them to create a journal of their weekly experiences.

Language

Conclusions: Besides covering basic skills as well as a variety of topics, the training was successful because it was conducted in Spanish. This insured that the main goal was met. The women's cultural experience and ease of living in and moving around Tucson could be enhanced with training in basic English survival skills.

Recommendations: Create a basic English curricula for them that covers important issues. Have "intensive" lessons in English the first few days after their arrival, and follow these "intensive" lessons up with short lessons twice a week during their stay. These English lessons could be combined with Cultural Orientation/Adaptation skills and Cultural Counseling which will be discussed in the next session. The English curriculum should cover, at a minimum:

- Basic English Survival Skills: greetings, asking directions, numbers, how to make and count change, niceties, etc.
- How to Handle an Emergency: how to identify oneself, ask where they are if they get lost, how to call the police, what to do/say if something happens they don't understand, etc.

Cultural Adaptation

Conclusions: In order to become completely adapted to a new culture, people generally go back and forth through four stages over a period of time until they are "adapted." These stages are 1. Fascination/Exploration, 2. Frustration/Irritation, 3. Investigation/Experimentation, and 4. Reconciliation/Adaptation. In terms of the four stages of cultural adaptation, the women remained in stage one (Fascination/Exploration). This is logical given the length of the program and the fact that the program is not geared toward complete adaptation to U.S. culture. Because the women had a limited time in the United States, and spent most of that time speaking Spanish and receiving excellent support from WILI representatives, they were able to comfortably not suffer from obvious culture shock, or to move to stage two (in which people experience frustration and irritation), other than to miss their families towards the end of the training. On their own, they were excellent observers of situations and people around them. Sometimes, however, they would draw inaccurate conclusions that could color their impressions of the United States and their potential opportunities to learn. For instance, the women believed that all Mexicans (or Mexican Americans) they saw should speak Spanish and were being "snobby" towards them when they did not speak in Spanish. Truth be known, there are many Mexican Americans in Tucson who do not speak Spanish, and hence, a cultural lesson to be learned. One woman more than the other tended to draw comparisons between the U.S. and Mexico, pointing out what their country and people lacked in resources and character and how resources and character were superior in the United States. For instance, one of Tucson's oldest funeral parlors could be seen from the balcony of the women's room. They would watch families and friends arrive and depart. After observing how families from the U.S. attend funerals "*in one group and remain together,*" one of the women made a cultural comparison that elevated the U.S. approach over the Mexican approach. "*We don't care so much about culture. It's so*

nice in the U.S. how families attend funerals all together. We're too scattered." These are very typical comments and comparisons from a person in Stage 1, Fascination/Exploration. If not discussed, however, this diminishing of one's own culture in comparison to the host culture could have an effect on the training itself, the transference of skills learned in the U.S. to Mexico, and could even play a part in some sense of lower self confidence as one of the women tended to express in portions of her interviews.

Recommendations: The participants in the WILI program would benefit from initial cultural orientation upon arrival as well as cultural "check ins" once or twice a week, perhaps in conjunction with their language lesson. A "cultural counselor" could help them to examine their observations and the different conclusions they could draw, pointing out the ones that may be true or false in terms of the culture of the United States. Initial orientation could include topics such as values, time, punctuality, personal cleanliness, grooming, appearance, leisure time, celebrations appropriate behavior and sexual taboos, as well as skills for dealing with difficult or compromising situations.

On-going orientation could cover practical topics such as reading a map, where to shop for what and more personal topics such as interpreting events, the role of women, etc. In order to facilitate the meetings with the cultural counselor, the women could be asked to either write or record journals to be shared with the "cultural counselor."

Confidence Building

Conclusions: The two women expressed different levels of self-confidence from the beginning. One was more reticent than the other and expressed more feelings about being limited educationally, skill wise and simply, as she said, "...*not sure of how to do things.*" She would often start sentences with, "*I have doubts about what I say.*" The initially confident woman seemed even more confident by the end of the training, while the other still expressed some disbelief in her own skills, upbringing and culture. This, however, may be more about the way the woman has always presented herself and may have no effect on how she uses the new restaurant skills in Oaxaca. (See Transition to Oaxaca section which follows.)

Recommendations: Given the way it is structured, the WILI program is already designed to build confidence. Even more can be done to help build it as well as help eliminate any deprecating "self-talk." Tie "confidence building" into the cultural counseling. Help the women observe themselves and their own growth throughout the training process through cultural counseling and simple homework assignments. This ongoing "homework" and cultural counseling would add another dimension to the training, and could be tied into the work that Suzana does with the women on self-esteem and personal comportment. Suzana does an excellent job of motivating the women and helping them feel they can achieve what they want to achieve. Cultural counseling could reinforce Suzana's teaching. As stated in the prior section, knowing more of the language and customs would provide more self-confidence and hence esteem. Meeting

and discussing issues with a cultural counselor would help put things into perspective and perhaps eliminate some of the generalizations drawn that are either not true or could be harmful to the participant's confidence and esteem.

Living Arrangements

Conclusions: The hotel arrangements were satisfactory although the women felt that the rooms were not kept clean over the period of a month.

Recommendations: If used again, the hotel should be notified about the need to maintain long-term cleaning and attention to the room, as appropriate. Given that the hotel provided a substantial discount in price to house the women, it may be that lack of communication regarding how much cleaning the women themselves were responsible for was a part of the problem. However, the women might also benefit from a different hotel or alternate approaches such as living with an appropriate family who has a separate room and can provide them with privacy, or in a bed and breakfast/boarding house situation where they have more contact with people outside the WILI program. In any case, the women/trainees may also need reassurance and experience/training in assertiveness in order to feel comfortable bringing problems to the attention of the front desk and/or the WILI coordinator for training.

Transition to Oaxaca

Conclusions: The Tucson training will become more relevant as transition training takes place.

Recommendations: When the transition training is done in, it will be important to help the women transfer each phase of what they learned to the reality of their situation in Oaxaca. Helpful topics to cover might be:

- Cultural transition: How to apply lessons learned.
- Review of the information received in Tucson.
- Review of the skills learned in Tucson.
- Discussion of how to transfer the skills and any limitations or adaptations necessary to make them relevant in Oaxaca.

Program Management

Conclusions: From the women's point of view, the program management was excellent and met their needs. They could not have been more positive about the organization and implementation of the training at the Poca Cosa and the personal support they received from WILI representatives and volunteers.

Recommendations: Repeat the same kind of training, perhaps with additions as suggested in recommendations in prior sections.

Pilar expressed a mix of enthusiasm at her new opportunities and sadness at the program ending when summarizing her experience. “We *felt like part of a family.*”