



jakodomaos

www.jakodoma.org

Vinohradská 146
Praha 3 – 130 00
IČ: 2274 8890

Organisation: **Jako doma – Homelike, o.p.s.**

Project: **Cooks Without Homes**

Country: **Czech Republic**

Executive summary

The idea of the *Cooks Without Homes* emerged with an awareness that many homeless women want to participate in the society. However, often due to gender based discrimination in the labor market, due to their low self-esteem and their complex needs, it is almost impossible for these women to get a lasting job. Our *Cooks Without Homes* are women in difficult economic, social and housing situation. Although most of them have reached the lows, none of them have given up their hopes for dignity.

This has led us to put in place a project, that is proud to portray homeless people differently. *Cooks Without Homes* is an "upside down charity", where these women actively engage in changing the public perception of homelessness. Our unusual coworkers cook their food for the public, and thus they help to disrupt the prevailing image of passivity amongst homeless people. At the same time, they are publicly showing their abilities, skills and enthusiasm.

Cooks Without Homes present their vegan food stalls at different farmers markets, at various public and cultural events. Their food is always sold for voluntary contribution, thus the project aims to promote the idea of social justice regardless of customers financial situation. Through the project, homeless women can help others, which is often their ultimate empowering experience, together with the chance to show their skills publicly and proudly. Therefore, the work of *Cooks Without Homes* is not just about earning extra money. It is also an opportunity to meet others in similar situation, to create, and to be part of a wider supportive community network.

Moreover, the project is also linked to other activities within the organisation. Theater group, media workshops, public appearance at conferences, public campaigning and participation in various self help groups being just some of many. It is important to mention, that shared and democratic decision making within the whole organisation represent a key aspect of our aims.



jakodomaos

www jakodoma.org

Vinohradská 146
Praha 3 – 130 00
IČ: 2274 8890

Background

There are a clear and provable gender specific aspects to homelessness. Based on research and our experiences, we understand how different can situation of homeless woman be, comparing to those of men. It is a sad reality, that most of social services and homelessness organisations do not reflect this imbalance, and thus, they do not develop services tailored for women. This leads to an endless circle of discrimination, when women do not seek support in men dominated services. They become invisible to these services, and their needs remain unmet.

It is precisely the reason why has Jako doma developed programs specifically for women. *Cooks Without Homes* is an important one. We do believe (and we have experienced) that when women get a chance to seek support in a safe environment, they can build their confidence and reach stability. This has led to their ability to positive change in their life.

Key aspects

The key aspect of our work is to create an inclusive and cooperative environment, where we offer partnership rather than just help. Together with our women, we aim to define their troubles, their needs and the ways these can be met. Women in Jako doma are included in all decision making processes. Together we build our activities democratically, based on respecting different experiences, ideas and opinions of all.

Our aims

- to work together with homeless women, to build partnership
- to integrate homeless women, to empower and to break the endless circle of homelessness
- to challenge societal attitudes towards homeless people
- to activate womens own abilities
- to put forward gender specific aspects to homelessness



jakodomaos

www jakodoma.org

Vinohradská 146
Praha 3 – 130 00
IČ: 2274 8890

The process and its outcomes

Activities of *Cooks Without Homes* have started in spring 2013. Since, the project has been growing in quality, visibility and size. Fifty homeless women have been engaged in the project so far, and the popularity still grows. At the beginning, we had to seek potential coworkers in different services such as dorms and shelters, whilst currently, we are being contacted by women themselves. The current team of our coworkers consists of fourteen homeless women.

At the beginning of the project, we were able to organize four stalls per month. In winter time, we now organize about fifteen stalls per month. During summer time we operate every day apart from Sunday.

In less than two years of the project, homeless women and Jako doma team members attended numerous cooking courses. The organisation has also purchased own van, we have improved outdoor cooking, and created an incentive system for engaging women and for presenting their skills in public. We are still gradually equipping our temporary kitchen.

Jako doma cooperates with a small organic firm on long term basis, which supplies the project with surplus vegetables and fruit. Since October 2014 we have put in place a catering service created by *Cooks Without Homes* together with the team of Jako doma. Currently, we provide four to five catering services per month, and we have noticed an increased interest in this service. Recently we have catered for different conferences and events for example for French and American Embassies, different exhibition openings, and other events. For references please visit: <http://jakodoma.org/kucharky-bez-domova/reference/>

Our future

Our great dream is to open a high street kitchen and bistro directly in the local community. This will provide stable work environment to our cooks. Currently, we are searching for a suitable space to open the kitchen. Our goal is to fully employ at least four homeless women at the time. Through full time employment, women will get a chance to tackle their unresolved debts, which is often the reason they have remained in hopeless situation. Debts are often the main barrier that hinders



jakodomaos

www jakodoma.org

Vinohradská 146
Praha 3 – 130 00
IČ: 2274 8890

their attempts to reintegrate into an "ordinary life". Our vegan bistro will provide inexpensive and quality food, so that people from all social backgrounds can afford it. Our important goal is to improve our catering services and to create richer menus, and to continue employing women. Our cooks will create their personalized menus based on their life stories. Thus, we strive not only for professional service, but also for publicly communicating the idea of empowering homeless women.

Organizational aspects

Currently our team constitutes of a supervisor, a coordinator, an operational worker, a financial director and fourteen cook coworkers. The supervisor, the coordinator and the operational worker meet weekly. Our full team meets together at least once per month. An external coach also supports Jako doma team once per week. Monthly meetings with homeless women provide an opportunity for reflective practice, planning, feedback and defining needed improvements. Because of interlinked activities within the organisation, the team of Jako doma meets the co-working cooks in our shared office.

Financing and fundraising

Our project is funded by small grants (Nadace Via, Nadace Orlických, Slovensko-Český ženský fond), and by individual donors. Currently, we have gained support of an individual donor, who will fund the realization and equipment for our stone kitchen and bistro. In December 2014, we have also put in place a successful Christmas campaign, when we raised 3200 EUR for a professional cooker with oven. Furthermore, we have organized fundraising events such as concerts and cultural programs, where we raised financial donations from small donors. We are happy, that other subjects who sympathise with the idea of *Cooks Without Homes* organize fundraising events on our behalf. Although the project is still partially funded, we are balancing our way towards financial independence and sustainability.