



EmpowerMed

Empowering women to take action
against energy poverty
in the Mediterranean

Collective Assemblies Training



EmpowerMed





Summary of content

- Context of Collective Assemblies
- Strategies to involve, based on needs identification
- Methodology and structure
- What are the results?
- Communication with people affected
- Further information and materials



Context of Collective Assemblies

“Analysing the context is key to plan the structure of Collective Assemblies in advance.

It allows us to foresee what kind of cases we are likely to receive, or situations we will probably face”

Context of Collective Assemblies

Público INICIA SESIÓN ÚNETE A P

SOCIEDAD SUCESOS EDUCACIÓN SANIDAD IGUALDAD INMIGRACIÓN MEDIO AMBIENTE DERECHOS HUMANOS MÁS

POBREZA ENERGÉTICA

Una de cada diez personas en España no puede calentar su hogar

Tras las bucólicas estampas nevadas de estos días hay personas sufriendo por casas que no aíslan bien del frío y muchas familias que no pueden hacer frente a sus facturas de calefacción, luz o agua caliente.

In Spain at least 1/10 people unable to keep their homes warm

Spanish utilities profit more than others in the EU

BENEFICIOS DE LAS ELÉCTRICAS

Relación entre los promedios de los beneficios de las empresas y EBITDA (ganancia antes de intereses, impuestos, depreciación y amortización) de las principales empresas eléctricas de España, Alemania, Francia y Reino Unido (2013, 2016)

	EBITDA / FACTURACIÓN	RESULTADOS / FACTURACIÓN
ESPAÑA	18%	8%
ALEMANIA	11%	-4%
FRANCIA	23%	4%
REINO UNIDO	7%	1%

Fuente: Observatorio de la Sostenibilidad.



Context of Collective Assemblies

DIRECTIVE 2009/72/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL concerning common rules for the internal market in electricity

Spain did not comply with Directive 2009/72 / EC which states that an effective separation between producing, distributing and commercializing electricity companies must be ensured.

The deadline for transposing the Directive was March 3, 2011.

-> 15/10/2012 The Commission warned Spain that it was still not complying with the Directive



Context of Collective Assemblies

Law 24/2013 on the electricity sector

Describes energy as a “service in the general economic interest” and has served to further deregulate the electricity market. It poses difficulties on energy poverty causes such as energy prices.

Law 24/2015 of the Catalan Parliament

Law 24/2015 is the legal framework that protects, at Catalan level, vulnerable people from disconnections. This law was proposed precisely from the work on Collective assemblies that the Alliance against Energy Poverty had been doing after a year (from 2014 to 2015). The protection of this law has changed the type of cases that arrive to the Collective assemblies but it is precisely this adaptation to the actual context what makes this tool/initiative useful.



Strategies to involve, based on needs identification

“Needs should be identified from the context but also from practice. During the implementation of Collective Assemblies we will identify new needs, also depending on our advocacy work”





Strategies to involve, based on needs identification

In Barcelona experience, the needs identified are:

- Unpaid bills and **disconnections**. Irregular connexions
- **Excessive collecting** (improper fees charging, changes of tariffs), **phone harassment**, denial of new contracts, etc.
- General **lack of information** about:
 - Our rights
 - Meaning of our bills
- Companies taking advantage of the **opacity** of the system and of **bureaucracy**



Strategies to involve, based on needs identification

Certain collectives are specially affected by energy poverty. Special needs will require specific actions or materials. An example of **particularly vulnerable groups**:

- Women
- Elderly
- Migrant population
- single parent families
- people living in occupied flats
- ...



Strategies to involve, based on needs identification

The mass media and some administrations often have certain imaginaries:

- **Assistentialism** (payment of bills without giving any further tools)
- **Blaming/victimisation** (“families consume too much”, “they don’t know how to manage their spending”, “they don’t want to pay”, etc.)

From this, certain needs are also identified:

- Need for **advocacy and communication work**
- Need for **mutual support, empowerment** and collective construction of knowledge



Methodology and Structure

“The structure of Collective Assemblies responds to the needs identified. It should maintain a minimum common denominator (the methodology), but some parts can be flexible, just as the context, laws and needs change.”



Methodology and Structure

“Collective Assemblies structure in Barcelona responds to the context, legal framework and most common cases experience in the field. It is created in the image and likeness of Platform Against Evictions success case.”



Methodology and Structure

Main structure:

- 5min -> **Welcome:** Unblaming/empowering speech, preferably by someone affected that has consistently participated in previous assemblies
- 3min -> **Who are we?** The Alliance, collective or organisation leading the initiative
- 2min -> **Offering of dissemination materials,** for those who can leave posters or leaflets in key locations of their neighbourhoods
- 10min -> **General steps to take** in most common cases



Methodology and Structure

- 5min -> **Taking part in the survey:** file card that includes sociodemographic data and also energy poverty data. Also acceptance of data management regarding Data protection laws.
- 1h 30min -> **Actual cases/testimonies:** starting with those attending for the first time and following with those who need monitoring on the steps taken since last assembly
- 10min -> **Accompaniment:** Collective agreement/organisation on those cases that require accompaniment visits to utilities.
- **Possible Coordination Space**



Methodology and Structure

Collective Assemblies **methodology** works on the following principles:

- Open sessions: everybody is welcome to join
- Biweekly sessions, always in the same venue.
- Continuity between sessions: people is expected to come back
- Finding solutions to cases + learning together





Methodology and Structure

- Breaks with unidirectionality and expert logic (everybody has something to share about their experience and case)
 - Everybody can give advice or share their opinions
 - The previous study of the context should help to have prepared some answers/steps
 - With the time, more and more people will know what those steps are, though every case is different and has its particularities
- Accompaniment visits when advice might not be sufficient, when a specific need is identified, or when the person has tried by him/herself and does not success



Methodology and Structure

Collective Assemblies **facilitation** requires the following roles:

- 1 person to give the “Welcome” speech
- 1 person to explain “Who we are”
- 1 person to explain “Steps to take in most common cases”
- 1 person to explain the importance of dissemination materials
- 1 person to keep everyone’s turn to speak. Normally this person also takes notes for a later description on the website.



Methodology and Structure

- 1 person to ensure the forms are filled in properly
- Ensure at least 3 people that have been attending consistently and might be willing to share their case, views or opinions
- 1 or more people for accompaniment (preferably 2 or more)

*At the beginning some people can assume more than one role but the ideal is for them to be as much shared as possible



What are the results?

“Limitations or challenges faced in the implementation of Collective Assemblies should be overcome through the strengths and opportunities of this initiative”



What are the results?

- Empowerment
- Transformation of roles
- Collective construction of knowledge
- Responsibility shared
- Creation of a network of mutual support
 - stays in time (continuity)
 - transforms at the same time than the changing context (breaks with a static view of the matter).





What are the results?

LIMITATIONS/CHALLENGES

- Changing and complex context
- Infinite cases
- We don't have solutions for everything!
- Difficulty of arriving beyond most common cases and collectives
(not everybody knows the initiative) → leaflets, communication work, etc.
- Certain intermittence of participants
 - Depending on personal situation,
 - Depending on motivation



What are the results?

STRENGTHS / OPPORTUNITIES

- Affected people are now “experts”
- Immediacy, link with reality on real time, ability to react quickly
- Thinking together solutions and strategies
 - “What works for me can work for somebody else”, “we tried this and didn’t work, so we have to try something new”, etc.
- Historical accumulation of knowledge, etc.
- Feeling of belonging to a network, to a “family”
 - Emotional support & collective strength instead of assistentialism

Communication with people affected

Through videos, website and social networks and

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VelpStJ8ueI>

www.pobresaenergetica.es

https://twitter.com/APE_Cat



The screenshot shows the website 'Aliança Contra la Pobresa Energètica'. The logo features a lightbulb with a plug. The navigation menu includes: INICI, QUI SOM, TENS DRETS!, ACCIONS, CRÒNIQUES, DOCUMENTS, PARTICIPA!. A red banner reads: 'Volen tallar-te l'aigua, la llum o el gas? Segueix els nostres consells!'. Below it, 'Últimes entrades' lists 'Tret de sortida de la ILP de mesures per'. On the right, there's a video player for '#DERECHOSCORTADOS' showing two women, and a section for 'ILP HABITATGE' with a video titled 'Un país sense talls'.



Communication with people affected

Through leaflets/posters for dissemination in key locations:

- Markets
- Health centres
- Seniors' centres
- Social services offices
- Employment offices
- At the exits of utility offices



Communication with people affected

Apart from offering these materials in the Collective Assemblies, **once every two weeks there is an appointment of dissemination group of the Assembly**, in a chosen neighbourhood, to hand in the materials in person, directly to people on the street, markets, outside key offices, etc., so that we can explain more details if needed.





Communication with people affected

Through useful documents or templates that help with the bureaucracy /technical terms and barriers

<https://pobresaenergetica.es/index.php/ca/passos-a-seguir/documents-utills>

The screenshot shows the website 'ALIANÇA CONTRA LA POBRESA ENERGÈTICA'. The header is red with a logo on the left and navigation links: 'Inici', 'Qui som?', 'Passos a seguir', 'Cròniques', 'Mitjans', 'Agenda', 'Contacte'. Below the header is a banner image with the text 'DOCUMENTS ÚTILS' and a date 'Dilluns, 21 Octubre'. The main content area is titled 'Documents útils' and lists three documents:

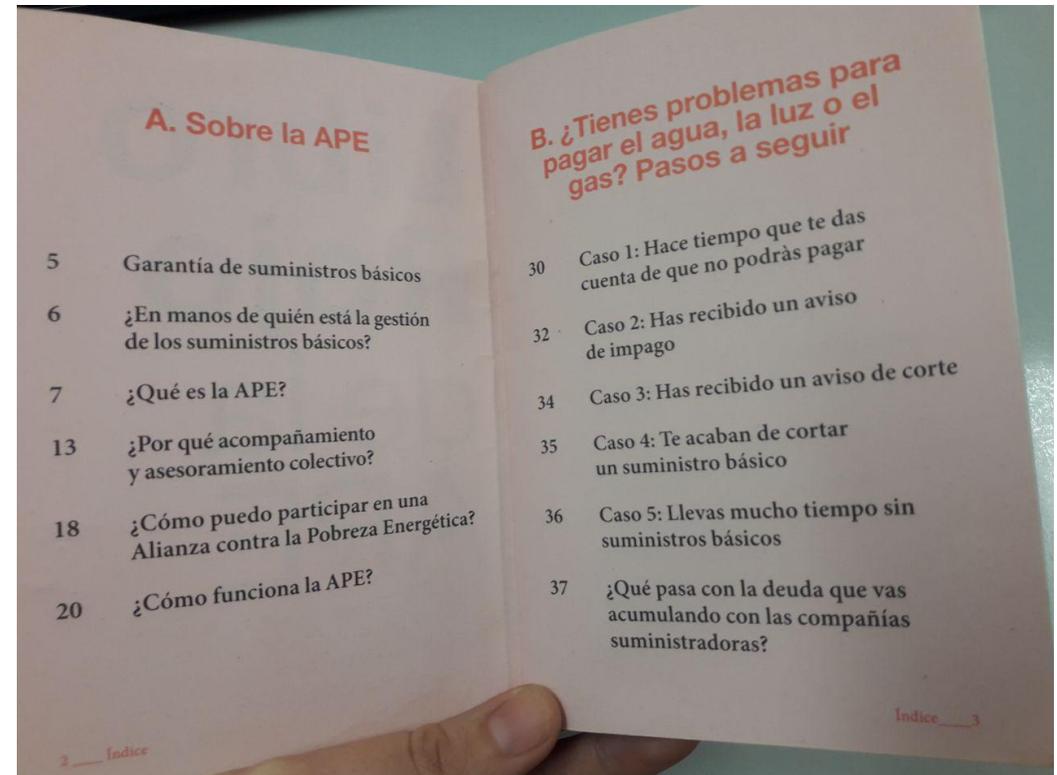
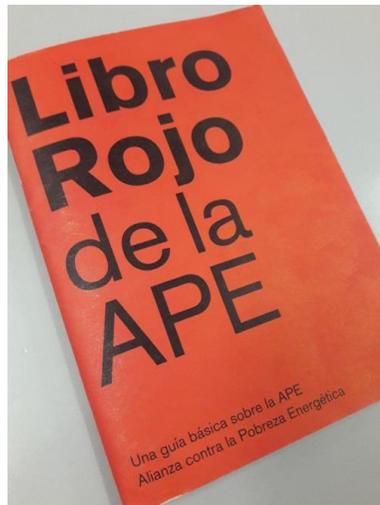
- 1 - Llei 24/2015, del 29 de juliol, de mesures urgents per a afrontar l'emergència en l'àmbit de l'habitatge i la pobresa energètica. [LLEI-24-2015.pdf](#) [Details] [Download]
- 2 - Model per presentar a l'empresa si t'han tallat els subministraments bàsics o tens amenaça de tall (.doc) [151019_Doc-garantia-subm-basics-ILP.vf_.doc](#) [Details] [Download]
- 3 - Sol·licitud informe de risc exclusió residencial a serveis socials (.doc) [151019 INFORME-Exclusio-Residencial-SSocials ILP.doc](#) [Details] [Download]

On the right side, there are social media links: 'Segueix-nos a Facebook', 'Segueix-nos a Twitter', 'Segueix-nos a Youtube', and 'Segueix-nos a Telegram'. Below these is a 'Youtube' section with a video thumbnail dated '10/10/2019...'.



Communication with people affected

Also the “Red Book” is a guide for the Collective Assembly newcomers





Communication with people affected

What is in the “Red Book”?

- **Principles of the initiative:** to guarantee basic supplies like energy through empowerment
- **Context of the energy model in the country/region:** explained in a simplified way, through understandable examples or terms
- **Who are we?** Small explanation of who holds the initiative
- **Why a Collective Assembly?** The benefits of the methodology
- **How can I take part?** Ways of participating in the initiative
- **Common cases:** a summary of 4 or 5 most common cases/situations and the steps to take in those cases



Communication with people affected

What does the “Red Book” serve for?

- It is a guide, a **written structure** of what actually happens in situ. Specially for those who arrive to the Collective Assembly for the first time, it is very useful to take the book home (fits in a pocket) and bring it now and then
- It is a **reminder of the basic steps** to take in common cases. When someone has doubts, there it is a summary of actions to take
- It is a “**manifiesto**” of how the Collective Assemblies work and how they are facilitated (rules of the game).



Further information and materials

For further details and examples, please access the written materials on this subject at [Empowermed website](https://www.empowermed.org)



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Thank you!

Collective Assemblies Training



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