Over time the month of March has come to be recognised by the women of Formentera as a month of celebration, bringing with it as it does International Working Women's Day, 8 March. The women of Formentera come out strong in their yearly recognition of this important date, a moment dedicated to mass mobilisation and the struggle to end the discrimination that translates into an unequal access to resources still today.

Once again, the Espai Dones Association, with the collaboration of Formentera's offices of Equality and Culture, has prepared activities for the entire month of March. Starting on the 3rd and extending all the way through the 23rd, this year's activities are reflective in nature. The month-long activities programme runs the gamut; from a photo exhibition by Isa Sanz and storytelling by Encarna de las Heras, to a reading of the manifesto representing the day's founding ideals and – an extremely important event for the aged community of Formentera – the sixth annual homage to elderly women, a celebration of the history of women in Formentera.

Opening the programme schedule, on 8 March, a reading of the day's manifesto is organised for the Plaça de la Constitució. Also on this date: Un hilito, a theatrical presentation by Inés Sarmiento that combines theatre, dance and audiovisual productions.

The remaining cultural acts, all of which place the woman at the forefront, vary from a projection of the film Cider House Rules; a conference on 11 March entitled “Eva al desnudo: parlem sobre l'autoestima” (All about Eve: Talking about self-esteem) and “En busca de la felicitat: per on començam?” (In pursuit of happiness: where do we start?), the latter scheduled to close out the programme of activities on 24 March. Both conferences will be led by the psychologist Anna Costa and will be held at the Plenary Hall of the Formentera Island Council. The list of events would of course not be complete without storytelling by Encarna de las Heras (15 March) or, that same evening, the traditional sisterhood supper for all those women – Espai Dones members or otherwise – who wish to participate.

The events programme was made possible by the Espai Dones Association, which devotes efforts year after year to the celebration of the International Working Women's Day and the International Day against Domestic Violence. These dates mark relevant moments in women's fight for effective equality and empowerment. Mainly, the celebrations organised around 8 March represent an important push for the defence and awareness of women's rights.

Formentera's Espai Dones Association

Espai Dones Formentera is a not-for-profit women's association. It was founded 5 March 2007 by a group of women who had for many years organised events for 8 March, International Working Women's Day.

The association's purpose is to promote gender equality and provide women with counsel, as well as organise workshops and events that are both educational and fun. It is a space to meet, dialogue, foster an environment of social well-being and collaborate with other local associations on the official commemoration of important moments in the struggle for equality.

Given the high-quality and nobility of the association's work, since last year an accord has officially linked Espai Dones with the Formentera Council, facilitating and formalising a relationship that had steadily evolved since the inception of the Council. Both entities are extremely active on issues of awareness and reflection, but also, from a legal standpoint, both recognise the important role of pressing charges in cases of abuse and discrimination, continuously moving forward in actively involving our society on this issue.

The Office of Equality believes support of gender-based initiatives to be vitally important, especially considering the oppressive atmosphere of cutbacks that has taken its toll on equality policies and, as an extension, increased risks for women and their children.

Any and all women in Formentera who wish to take part in Espai Dones can send an email to e spaidonesformentera@hotmail.com.

Working year-round for the empowerment of women

The Office of Social Welfare oversees the management of two fundamental services for the women of Formentera, the first being immediate support for victims of domestic violence and the second – complementary and of unqualified importance – equal-rights training and domestic

violence prevention. The support service for domestic abuse victims comprises immediate attention, mentoring and on-going support for the victims during periods of vulnerability. This service uses tools like the emergency telephone line (24 hours/day) and relies on a close coordination with the Guardia Civil. The service also includes home-visits when an immediate separation of the victim and aggressor is necessary. This is overseen in collaboration with the Eivissa Women's Office. Additionally, a therapeutic psychologist service is provided in cases of necessity, as is a service offering legal counsel.

We believe that equal-rights training is a very important factor in domestic violence prevention. For this reason the Office of Equality works closely with the Office of Culture in the realisation of communicative actions to generate social change and promote advancements in gender equality. We believe that every woman must attain a certain level of empowerment in order to defend herself and prevent domestic violence from taking place, especially on an island as pluralistic and diverse as ours.