

# STOP VIOLENCE NEWSLETTER

WOMEN'S  
LAW CENTER

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Quarterly newsletter lists the activities of the Women's Law Center in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence and violence against women within the period of October - December 2017.

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# Unusual activities carried out during the '16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence' Campaign

This year the '16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence' Campaign was special. It is for the first time that the activities planned by the Women's Law Centre were not limited to information sessions only, but also included thematic creative workshops for WLC beneficiaries, public lessons for young people from districts and training workshops for representatives of law enforcement bodies. Thus, during 25 November-10 December, about 560 persons became more aware of the severity and features of domestic violence, gender

stereotypes widely spread in our society encouraging aggressive behaviour and communication. The participants had the possibility to make proposals, ask questions and speak about cases of domestic violence, their actions and contact authorities. Specialists in the area, either lawyers or psychologists or gender equality experts, moderated the discussions. Each of them presented best practices from their experience.

## Information sessions in educational institutions

Students of Mondostud-Art College learned more about types of violence that victims are subjected to. The cases presented by WLC lawyers caught everybody's attention and made the students recall some of their own experiences, when they did not know what to do. The advice was more than welcome and now they know where to seek help, if needed.



Natalia Vilcu, Executive Director of the Women's Law Centre, talked to Master's degree students from Social Assistance and Psychology Department of the Free International University of Moldova, about a very sensitive and topical issue for our society - 'Women in detention and domestic violence'. This topic was the starting point for debates on such issues as: women's rights, stigmatisation of prisoners, difficulties hindering the reintegration after release and perpetuation of forms of domestic violence from one generation to another.



## '16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence' Campaign

A scientific-practical conference for students called 'Violence-Free Life: Zero Tolerance' was held on 7 December 2017 in 'Stefan cel Mare' Academy. Students presented well-documented papers that tackled the issue of domestic violence from different perspectives: legal analysis, gender-based discrimination, intervention of the police officer, psycho-emotional consequences of domestic violence. Teachers, students of Law, Civil Security and Public Order Department, and Academy management attended the conference. The event was organised in partnership with the Women's Law Centre.



We talked to students from the Environmental College about domestic violence in a rather unusual way. We tried a new approach and, together with psychologist Sergiu Toma, involved them in a game. Each of them could see for themselves how it feels to be 'trapped' by an inability to act, wanting to 'escape' but not having enough strength to do so. By means of such activities, young people learn why violence should not be tolerated, how a victim of domestic violence feels, why some people end up aggressing and others - tolerating it. To be able to cope with tense situations, young people should also learn how to develop such skills as assertive communication, capacity to negotiate and justify their own position. Education, hence, has a crucial role in raising a generation that will not accept domestic violence as normality.

## Information sessions for public authorities

At the request of Ialoveni District Council, WLC organised a series of meetings with the social workers and police officers from the district. Besides presenting the activity of the Centre and services available for domestic violence victims, we managed to start discussions on the difficulties encountered by professionals. If things are clearer for police officers, who have approved intervention guidelines, the intervention procedure is not regulated that well for social workers. The professionals need trainings and the multidisciplinary teams need to strengthen their intervention capacity.



During the '16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence' Campaign, members of the Carabineer Troops Department also participated in a training session. We were happy to see how interested they were to engage in discussions. Though initially it seemed that everyone had their own truth about domestic violence, confirmed by their individual experience and knowledge, when the Centre presented and analysed cases from its own practice, things did not seem so simple any more, and the stereotypes were at least doubted.



## '16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence' Campaign

The young people from Military Unit 1001 of the Carabineer Troops Department learned more about '16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence' Campaign. The lawyers of Women's Law Centre, Daniela Josanu and Violeta Andriuța, challenged them for a

discussion about forms of violence, stereotypes and how abuse is perceived in our society. We were glad to find them interested and eager to ask questions.



## WLC organises workshops for its beneficiaries



In a warm and friendly atmosphere, with music and heart-to-heart talks, WLC beneficiaries had the opportunity to participate in three creative workshops. Guided by the talented Natalia Sevchenko, the ladies, some of them accompanied by children, made bags for glasses, dolls and needle pillows. Though initially a bit shy and sceptical about the results, when they saw that step by step they were getting better at what they were doing, they became merrier. They started offering each other advice how to sew and glue better, how to match the colours. They had the opportunity to do new things and forget about the daily worries for several hours. There were three days spent differently. Three days when women reminisced about past memories, told funny stories, shared their dreams and regained the optimism they used to have once. WLC will continue this initiative, because women here do not only learn how to hand-made stuff, but also learn how to sing, laugh, share their worries and calm down their souls.



## On holidays, we prepared surprises for WLC beneficiaries

Saint Nicholas arrived to Maria, mother of three children, who decided not to tolerate domestic violence any more. She escaped desperately from the house of her aggressive husband, filed for divorce and now is trying to build a better and safer life for her children. She managed to find a job and rent a home for herself and her three children. WLC offered her the needed support. Besides legal counselling, our organisation helped her buy wood for the winter. Together with our friends, we also gathered the necessary goods for her and her children. Now they are happy to enjoy the holidays in calmness and peace.

We would also like to thank Maicom and VIS companies for their support. This year we again managed to prepare some small gifts for our beneficiaries and their children. These collaborations are a proof that nice things happen when efforts are joint for a good cause. Thank you!



## Christmas Fair - a place where everyone becomes better

Every year on Christmas Eve, the International Women's Club of Moldova traditionally organises one of the most pleasant and beautiful Christmas Fairs. In a family environment, the beneficiaries of Women's Law Centre participated in an exhibition together with members of 'Life without Domestic Violence' National Coalition. Women survivors of domestic violence prepared small surprises for everyone. Visitors could buy clothes for babies, hand-made bags, handbags and jewellery. By networking



with other participants, the participants established new contacts and entered into new partnerships.

The money raised at the event are donated for some humanitarian causes, used to buy equipment or develop some projects in partnership with non-profit organisations. Last year, WLC was one of the beneficiaries of the collected funds. Thus, we have the possibility to implement a project on economic empowerment of women survivors of domestic violence.

# Regional forums in partnership with the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova



During 16 October – 4 December 2017, members of Parliament and civil society representatives (including Women's Law Centre) conducted nine regional forums dedicated to prevention and elimination of violence in families and schools. The audience, consisting mainly of pupils, proved good knowledge of their rights and ability to argue their position. These children are not influenced by stereotypes and are well-anchored in the realities of the Republic of Moldova. At the same time, police officers, social workers and doctors from districts where discussions took place, presented their information and monitoring work during the year and made recommendations on how to improve the interventions of multidisciplinary teams in domestic violence cases. Teachers stressed, in particular, the need to have psychologists in schools.

The Centre's team spoke with young people about the features of domestic violence, services offered by WLC to victims of violence, gender stereotypes that foster domestic

violence, right to the child to be protected from violence and to live in a safe environment, and last but not

stakeholders. They supported the initiative to continue with similar activities in more districts from the



least, what to do when witnessing or being exposed to acts of violence.

The 277 participants liked the manner the speakers presented the information, appreciated the presence of experts and the opportunity to interact with some important

country, with the participation of parents, teachers, doctors, psychologists, social workers. The forums took place in the districts of Leova, Cantemir, Cimislia, Hincesti, Nisporeni, Ialoveni, Anenii Noi, Drochia and Ceadir-Lunga.

# Public lessons in Orhei and Falesti

About 80 young people, girls and boys, from Orhei and Falesti had a quite unusual day. They talked with professionals from UNFPA Moldova and Women's Law Centre about the gender roles and measures aimed at preventing gender-based violence, how women are perceived in our society, how roles are attributed, and how stereotypes perpetuate gender inequality. The discussions took them out of their comfort zone and challenged them to ponder more on these issues.



‘The approached topic raised my awareness. In today’s society we need to talk more about gender equality, about women and men, about their rights. I was surprised to hear that many women limit by themselves their rights, believing that they deserve to be bitten. At school we tackle such issues only at civic education, but it is too little.’ This is the opinion of Nichita Chetraru, pupil at ‘Alecu Russo’ Theoretical High School from Orhei.

The young people were involved in interactive sessions, role games and case analyses, which helped them identify gender stereotypes, become aware of the negative effects of inequality, adopt new attitudes and get involved actively in promoting gender equality among their peers.



# Extending the network of trainers among police officers



On 5-6 December this year, about 30 representatives of law enforcement bodies from Chisinau, Gagauzia, Balti, Orhei, Calarasi, Drochia, Riscani, Causeni and Hincesti, participated in a ToT course on prevention and response to domestic

violence, held by a team of national trainers. The police officers, trained in best practices of responding to violence, will train in their turn other police officers countrywide in order to improve the implementation of law and settlement of violence cases.

The ToT course for Moldovan police officers was organized with the support of the OSCE Mission in Moldova and is part of a broader effort of the Women's Law Centre and its partners, consisting of development of resources, such as course materials, practical guideli-

nes on efficient police intervention, guide for police officers, etc.

The workshop is conducted by WLC in partnership with the General Police Inspectorate, with the support of OSCE Moldova.



# WLC experts have trained the representatives of ATU Gagauzia law enforcement bodies in preventing and responding to domestic violence

For the first time, 22 police officers and 4 public lawyers from ATU Gagauzia participated in a training on best practices of responding to domestic violence cases, which took place in Comrat on 16 and 17 November.

A team of national trainers with a vast experience in training and advocacy against domestic violence conducted the trainings. The participants improved their skills as regards the effective and prompt investigation of domestic violence, protection of victims, and provision of complex support for the latter.

Biceva Tatiana, Senior Inspector at Child Protection Department of Ceadir-Lunga Police Inspectorate, describes the training as active and very useful. 'The training combines very well the theoretical and practical aspects. We discuss and analyse real cases. Today we've learned how to apply correctly the response guideline and assess violence from different perspectives: who the victim is, who the perpetrator is, and how to see beyond our stereotypes. Both the victim and the perpetrator are, in the first place, humans who need



help', states Tatiana.

'Over the past years, WLC conducted, in partnership with GPIs, trainings for the police officers from all across the country, and we are happy that today we are in Comrat and we can share the good practices on domestic violence response. Each

police officer was given a booklet, in Russian language, containing methodological guidelines about how the police is to act to prevent and combat domestic violence cases, which will allow the police officers to apply appropriately the law in force', said Eleonora Grosu, WLC Program Coordinator.

The workshop was conducted in partnership with 'Vesta' NGO – an association of seven women's organizations from ATU Gagauzia, with the financial support of the OSCE Mission to Moldova and OAK Foundation. The event is one of a series of trainings aimed to improve the skills of law enforcement bodies on domestic violence response.



## Judges, prosecutors and criminal investigative officers empowered to intervene in cases of domestic violence



During 30 November - 1 December, the Women's Law Centre conducted the workshop 'Implementing the Moldovan law on prevention and response to domestic violence' for judges, prosecutors and criminal

investigative officers from the whole country. The topics addressed during the workshop focused on causes of domestic violence, traumas and needs of the victim, while Psychologist Carolina Trigub explained the myths

and stereotypes about gender equality and domestic violence still prevailing in the society.

Implementation of protection measures and issues arising when examining cases of domestic violence in the court were discussed with Maria Ghervas, Judge at the Supreme Court of Justice. Last but not least, Lawyer Arina Turcan talked about the criminal law in prevention and response to domestic violence; how cases are investigated; ECtHR case-law, protection of and support to victims of domestic violence.

The trainings were organised in partnership with the National Justice Institute with the support of US Embassy in Moldova and OSCE Mission.

## Employees of Prison No. 7 - Rusca ready to efficiently meet the needs of women in detention

Employees of Prison No. 7 - Rusca participated in a workshop aimed at improving the knowledge of the special needs of women in detention, organised by WLC with the support of Swiss Cooperation Office in Moldova. Psychologists Sergiu Toma and Victoria Captari and Lawyer Arina Turcan talked about the rights and needs of women in detention, in particular survivors of violence; about the emotional states of a person subjected to traumas; about the labels we are inclined to assign them. During the workshop real cases were analysed. They revised the existing intervention practices and assessed the extent to which they comply with the international practices.

*'The workshop helped us see things from a broader perspective, with concrete solutions adjusted to each detained woman. Learning about the psychological conditions of a detained woman was new and useful for us.*

*The emotional state of these women, until they get accustomed with the penitentiary regime, is not always taken into account. At the same time, it is important to cooperate with civil society organizations in order to solve together the problems that we cannot handle on our own',* stated Maria Crivencov, Social Worker in Prison No. 7.

The workshop was organised under the project 'Improving the access



to justice, legal support and psychological help for women in detention, initiated by the Department of Penitentiary Institutions and WLC, with the financial support of Swiss Cooperation Office in Moldova. The Project aims at empowering women from the penitentiary by ensuring access to information about their rights, legal counseling, psychological support, as well as raising the prison staff awareness of the special needs of detained women.

# Destinies rehabilitated thanks to the WLC project for women in detention



The increasing number of women in detention has a negative impact not only on women and their families, in particular children, but on the entire society. It is time to ask ourselves: How can the situation be improved? What can we do?

**Statistics shows that the presence of violence throughout the entire life cycle of a woman, either in childhood, or in adulthood, or elderhood, is one of the main factors leading to women's imprisonment.**

In 2017, WLC with the support of the Swiss Cooperation Office in Moldova, in partnership with the Department of Penitentiary Institutions (DPI) piloted the project 'Improving the access to justice, legal support and psychological help for women in detention'. This project empowered the detained women, offered them increased access to information about their rights, and offered them legal counseling, including representation in courts, and last but not least, psychological support.

The cooperation of WLC team with the penitentiary staff was a huge success. The latter, who have a crucial role in determining women to build a new and safe life, were informed about the special needs of detained women. The staff of Ruscă Prison were familiarised with

the international standards, norms and recommendations on the need to mainstream gender issues in the penitentiary. During the training, the WLC professionals and prison staff worked together on case studies and managed to come up with a complex approach to meeting the special needs of detained women, determined by such vulnerabilities as: mental health, addictions, age, disabilities, ethnicity, etc.



In summary, the project activities helped detained women make their voice heard and have improved access to justice. Even after their release, women will still be able to benefit of the support offered by Women's Law Centre. There are still many things to do in order to secure better, safer and more gender-sensitive conditions in detention facilities, to diminish the negative consequences of detention on women, to decrease the number of women in detention.

**Helping a large number of women is one of the main achievements in 2017:**

**77** women received legal aid;

**3** women were helped with the examination of the application for release on parole;

**2** women submitted the second appeal to the Supreme Court of Justice, one of which was accepted and the case was sent for rehearing;

**2** women are in the process of initiating a review procedure;

**2** women are in the process of revision of cases on their deprivation of parental rights;

**2** beneficiaries managed to recover the ownership of their dwelling, thanks to the support of WLC lawyer;

**5** beneficiaries, with the help of WLC lawyer, received free legal aid from Chisinau Territorial Office;

**7 of 10** women who had barriers in their communication with their children, managed to meet them. WLC facilitated the visits of the children to the prison;

**17** women availed of psychological counselling and managed to cope with their traumas, regaining self-trust.

# SUMMARY OF THE YEAR

## WLC Activity in Numbers



During 2017, WLC provided support to 465 beneficiaries, of whom 456 are women, and 186 are women with underage children.

Most of them live in the urban area - 338, and 127 - in the rural area. Psychological violence is the most frequent form of violence - 364

cases, followed by the physical violence - 307 cases, economic - 222 cases, sexual - 20 cases, and spiritual - 10 cases.

Statistics show that women aged 25-44 and women aged 65 and more

suffer most often from domestic violence.

WLC facilitated the issuance of 109 Protection Orders, 39 criminal cases, 12 administrative cases and 21 civil cases (for dissolution of marriage, determining the domicile of minor children, as well as a case

## More efficient work instruments for health workers and social workers

Health workers and representatives of the Social Assistance and Family Protection Divisions participated in a workshop aimed at reviewing and improving the guidelines on the work procedures in cases of domestic violence. The discussions focused on the identification, assessment, documentation and reporting of domestic violence. Each group listed a series of recommendations that would improve the intervention of multidisciplinary teams in situations of abuse. For example, when discussing about risk assessment

and management, social workers recommended developing a form that would list all risk factors, history of the abuse, previous incidents, possibility to collect information that would be useful to identify the psycho-emotional profile of the perpetrator, convening of the multidisciplinary team. These are just a few recommendations that need to be systematized, supplemented and submitted for inclusion in the guidelines. These

adjustments allow professionals to work in a coordinated manner and intervene in the best way.





## After five years of sexual harassment, Ana's life split into 'before' and 'after'. Only that 'after'... she did not quite know how to live anymore

It is usually difficult to produce evidence of sexual harassment, because such cases are viewed mainly as an issue of perception and way of interpreting certain behaviours. Between the committal of the crime and sentencing of the perpetrator, the victims have to deal with many violations of their rights, preconceived approaches, stereotypes, intimidations, and discriminatory actions. These violations discourage victims from maintaining their allegations till the end, with most of them breaking down along the way and withdrawing their complaints.

Usually the court trials last for several years, and the victim has to go from one court to another in search for the truth. Ana, who had been subjected to sexual harassment for five years, had to pass through the same journey. It took three years to recognize the guilt of the perpetrator. It was not a simple case, but with the help of WLC lawyer, it had a happy end.

Everything started in 2008, when she met Andrei, a work peer. Initially they became friends. They used to have lunch together. They liked talking to each other. Sometimes they would go in trips together with other peers. Andrei was married and had two children. He would say that things had not been working well for years in their marriage, and that there were heading towards a divorce. In 2009, after Ana

celebrated her birthday together with her work peers, Andrei helped her carry home her flowers and gifts. That evening, being drunk, they had a sexual intercourse. Soon after that day, Igor, Ana's boyfriend and future husband, decided to return from abroad. It was the point when the situation changed dramatically. Ana decided to end all contacts with Andrei. She refused to meet him, did not accept any gifts from him, did not answer his calls. All she wanted was to continue her life in peace, together with Igor. Then the blackmailing began. Dozens of denigrating and humiliating messages were sent to the future husband. 'I will destroy you', 'you are stupid', 'let her go, this girl is not for you', 'don't be so happy, this is not your daughter'. The more distance Ana would put between them, the worse threats she would get. Andrei threatened to stage various crimes for her husband, to put drugs or a bomb in his car, to tell everyone about their relationship.

Being afraid that he will really do so, Ana would give in and meet secretly with Andrei. She was afraid to tell about this to Igor, who she married meanwhile. Igor could sense that something weird was happening to his wife. 'She would get the messages, read them, and freak out. She became depressed. She did not have any wish to live. She was crying continuously', told us Igor. One day the woman broke down, especially since threats conti-

nued during her pregnancy and after she had the baby. She told everything to her husband, how everything started, why she is being threatened by this person, who wants to hurt them. They decided to notify the police about Andrei's actions. A criminal file was started for sexual harassment. The first-instance court acquitted Andrei on grounds that the defendant's actions did not constitute a crime, though the accumulated evidence and the psychological assessment showed clearly that the woman continued to suffer and was affected emotionally. Ana was wrapped in fear, loneliness, anger, desire to self-punish and even to solve everything by killing herself. Ana's life was split into 'before' and 'after'. Only that 'after'... she did not quite know how to live anymore. She would feel naked, burdened, humiliated, and deprived of the right to be happy and to love.

The first-instance court judgement was challenged at the Appellate Court, and then at the Supreme Court of Justice. Finally, after a three-year journey from one court to another, from court hearings to psychiatric assessments, accumulation of evidence, case retrieval, Ana's lawyer managed to get a final and irrevocable judgement, in December 2017, recognising the guilt for sexual harassment, with the convict being forced to pay moral damages and a fine.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

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As WLC statistics reveals that more and more elderly face domestic violence. We discussed this phenomenon with beneficiaries of Neumanist Day Center for the elderly. We presented our legal and psychological services for victims of domestic violence. Many of them confessed that they used to be or still were subjected to violence, that they had lost their hope and had no one to ask for help. Most of the times they are maltreated by close relatives or even children, and they do not dare to go against them. We promised to return to them every time we have a request, and encouraged them to contact us whenever they need the advice of a lawyer. We thank them for the warm welcome. It was for sure the beginning of a nice cooperation.

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Members of 'Life without Domestic Violence' National Coalition made a public appeal, urging public authorities to take concrete and immediate actions in order to respond effectively to violence against women. The appeal was made as part of the public dialogue entitled 'You Are Not Alone: United to End Violence Against Women', held in Chisinau under the Global Campaign to End Violence against Women and Girls. The event started with a theatre play

about a classical case of domestic violence, showing the character's journey from one professional to the other, as well as her relationship with a system that is sometimes inert to people's sufferings. The coalition will monitor the implementation of the actions that the authorities, present at the event, committed to.

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Coordinator of the WLC's Specialised Service for the Support of Domestic Violence Victims, Daniela Josanu, participated in the regional workshop 'Economic, Social and Political Empowerment of Women'. The workshop held in Bratislava, during 20-26 November 2017, was a good opportunity to study the international experience and take over the best practices on gender quality; on how to prevent and end violence against women; how the concept of 'gender equality' functions on the labour market, in entrepreneurship and in politics. Economic empowerment techniques, which proved to be efficient in other countries, such as Georgia, will be analysed, adjusted to the needs of WLC beneficiaries, and implemented as part of the organisation's projects.

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Criminal investigative officers celebrate their professional day on 10 November of each year. On this occasion, Women's Law Centre was awarded a Thank-You Diploma for its long-term and fruitful cooperation. We would like to sincerely congratulate our partners for their professionalism and dedication, as well as for their respect for the law and



for the country's citizens.

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The Independent Journalism Centre organised the 23rd edition of 'Journalists of the Year' Gala. This year the Women's Law Centre had the honour to award the Prize for the Best Blog to Elena Robu. Congratulations to the winners. We wish you perseverance and inspiration!

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The cooperation of WLC and police inspectors is crucial and helps us offer support to more victims of domestic violence. This time we visited the Centre Police Inspectorate. Its management met us with openness and warmth. We discussed about the positive practices of referring victims of domestic violence, as well as aspects that need to be improved in order to offer appropriate support to victims and diminish the magnitude of domestic violence. During the meeting with the all staff members of the Centre Police Inspectorate, they raised many practical and current issues that police inspectors encounter in the fieldwork. The WLC lawyers encouraged the police inspectors to make use of the services of our organisation. An efficient intervention is possible only by joining efforts.



*"All our dreams can come true if we have the courage to pursue them."  
- Walt Disney-*

*Thank you for supporting our work in 2017! We are honored to have your partnership in promoting women's rights and helping women live a life without violence in Moldova. Wishing you Happy Holidays and a New Year filled with prosperity and success!*

*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!*

*The Women's Law Center Team*

*Handmade by WLC beneficiaries and staff*

*Merry* CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY *New Year*



## Who are we?

Public Association "Women's Law Center" (hereinafter – WLC) is a non-governmental organization, established in 2009.

The purpose of WLC is to ensure women's rights from gender perspective, both in the process of elaboration and implementation of the law.

WLC carries out activities aimed at preventing and combating domestic violence, provides direct legal and psychological assistance to the victims of domestic violence. WLC advocates for equal opportunities among men and women in public and private life, is a credible partner of the government and civil society and participates in elaboration of public policies.

WLC ensures Secretariat of the National Coalition „Life without Domestic Violence (hereinafter National Coalition). National Coalition comprises 22 non-governmental organizations and public institutions active in preventing and combating domestic violence and violence against women.

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