



STOP VIOLENCE NEWSLETTER

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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 January - March 2018

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Spring Begins with Trainings and a Martisor

On 1-2 March, approximately 30 judges, prosecutors and investigative officers attended the training on judicial practice in examining domestic violence cases.

In his opening speech, Timothy P. Buckley, Director of the Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement Section, US Department of State, stated the importance of these trainings in the context of the Moldovan Government's approval of the National Strategy on Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence.

'The approval of the Strategy commits Republic of Moldova to concrete actions to reduce domestic violence. Without you, however, this would be difficult to achieve. We are glad to see that you are interested in continuous training and I am convinced that the information acquired at these trainings will

be useful for your work', said Timothy P. Buckley in the opening remarks.

In order to preserve the March tradition and as a token of goodwill and professional success, participants received a Martisor from the US Embassy officials. The training sessions continued with discussing trauma and the needs of domestic violence victims, peculiarities of domestic violence cases



examination in courts, the roles of the prosecutor and the investigative officer in investigating and solving cases of violence, and the role of the lawyer in defending victims of violence. Participants were also involved in solving several case studies. The trainings were organized by the National Institute of Justice and the Women's Law Centre, with the support of the US Embassy in Moldova, the Embassy of Sweden in Moldova, the OSCE Mission and the OAK Foundation.

Training the Heads and Officers of the Criminal Investigative Subdivisions

In March, heads and officers of criminal investigative subdivisions from the General Police Inspectorate participated in trainings on domestic violence. Trainers emphasized legislative issues relevant to domestic violence, discussed good practices of police intervention, the importance of overcoming gender stereotypes, and debated cases from the officers' practice needing clarification.



'Regional trainings allow investigative officers from different territorial subdivisions to report on domestic violence offenses investigations and on cooperation with other authorities, state and non-governmental institutions. Together with the WLC lawyers, we identi-



fied practical solutions and explicit answers to the problems faced by officers in their daily work', said Ina Chiriliuc, Trainer and Senior Investigative Officer in the Analysis, Planning and Training Division of the General Criminal Investigative Division of GPI.

Given several amendments to the legislation, investigative officers asked questions about the new victim protection mechanisms, such as application of the emergency restriction order, correct classification of the incriminated acts and differentiation of domestic violence cases from other crimes. Another highly debated aspect was the psychological side of

the phenomenon, and the manner the psychological evaluation may be applied in identifying certain deeds, as well as the importance of working with both the victim and the perpetrator in preventing violence.

'At these trainings we aim to inform and familiarize investigative officers with the best practices in responding to domestic violence cases, to talk about the importance of referring victims to specialized services and the effective co-operation between authorities and service providers. We are glad that investigative officers are responsive, involved in discussions and requested for more similar trainings to be organized', said Violeta Andriuta, WLC Lawyer.

Thus, the heads of all criminal investigative subdivisions and over 390 investigative officers from the North, South and Centre regions received training. The Women's Law Centre and the General Criminal Investigative Division have established partnership to strengthen the knowledge of professionals in the field.

Trainings are carried out with the support of the Embassy of Sweden in Moldova and the OAK Foundation.



Training of the Court Officials

For the first time, judicial assistants, court secretaries and heads of secretariats attended a seminar on *Judicial Practice in Examining Domestic Violence Cases* on 23 March. Topics related to the specific features of this phenomenon, evidences included into the files and victims protection measures.

Trainers challenged participants to consider the role of the courts

beyond providing assistance, specialists' attitude towards women victims of domestic violence and difficulties encountered in their work.

Representatives of the US Embassy stated their support for the judiciary system changes aimed at improving and responding to the needs of domestic violence victims. Participants' willingness to gain new and useful information was

appreciated in particular, given the role of the court personnel in responding to domestic violence cases.

The seminar was organized by the WLC and the National Institute of Justice, with the financial support of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, the US Embassy in Moldova, the Embassy of Sweden and the OAK Foundation.



Multidisciplinary Intervention Practices of Social Workers and Police Officers from Ialoveni



Police officers and social workers from Ialoveni district discussed the multidisciplinary approach towards domestic violence cases and the ways to achieve effective referral and cooperation between authorities. At the same time, they analyzed how to ensure domestic violence victims' access to services and how to provide a coordinated response in such cases.

Trainings are carried out in the context of the Cooperation Agreement signed between the WLC and the Social Assistance and Family Protection Division in Ialoveni, whereby the parties committed to share information, experience and provide mutual assistance in emergency interventions for gender-based violence cases, especially domestic violence.

The partner in organising these trainings was the General Police Inspectorate, with the financial support of the Embassy of Sweden and the OAK Foundation.



The National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for 2018-2023 was Approved



On 22 February 2018, the Government of the Republic of Moldova approved the National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence for 2018-2023. This unique document for the Republic of Moldova is based on the four pillars of the Istanbul Convention: prevention, protection, prosecution and integrated policies.

The Strategy focuses on informing the public about the seriousness of the phenomenon, promoting zero tolerance to all forms of violence, fighting gender stereotypes and preconceptions, improving the legal and regulatory framework by aligning them to the international standards, implementing relevant best practices and increasing the efficiency of stakeholders working with domestic violence issues.

The Women's Law Centre coordinated the process of drafting and writing the Strategy, involving at different stages of consultations representatives of the civil society,

the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection, subject-matter experts and survivors of domestic violence.

The Strategy will be implemented via two action plans (2018-2020 and 2021-2023) and will involve central, local authorities and civil society institutions.

The Women's Law Centre was elected as a member of the General Police Inspectorate's Strategic Council Advisory Group

The Women's Law Centre was elected as a member of the General Police Inspectorate's Strategic Council Advisory Group, a platform that aims to ensure transparency in the police decision-making and reforming process. The first meeting took place on 13 February, when the report on the implementation of the 2016-2020 Police Development Strategy during 2017 was presented.

The Strategic Council includes 11 civil society representatives, selected by the NGO Council following a public call. Members



were appointed for a two-year term. In this role we will actively engage in strategic decision-making in the area of public order and public security by promoting democratic values, respect for gender

equality principles, and the right of everyone, especially women, to live without violence.

How Efficiently Does the Judiciary Respond to Cases of Domestic Violence? Conclusions of the Court Hearings Monitoring.



For about a year, 11 monitors trained by the Global Rights for Women experts, had monitored and documented court hearings in domestic violence and trafficking in human beings cases. The monitoring summing-up session was held on 15 March, when participants shared their impressions and experience of monitoring court hearings.

Mr. Iurie Perevoznic coordinated the entire monitoring process and claims that 'although it is too early to come up with some conclusions, certain practices have been identified. For example, judges may order a closed hearing without following the procedure. Perpetrators' statements are perceived as absolute truth, while victim's statements are appreciated critically. It is especially emphasized when victim's behaviour is not "as it should be" in their opinion. The assumption is that the peculiarities of domestic violence cases are not understood.'



'We monitored just the tip of the iceberg. Problems have much deeper roots and come from education. People in the system have a very high tolerance to the phenomenon of violence. I hope that step by step

we will get where we want to be,' mentioned Rodica Savciuc, a project monitor.

Ion Lunca, another participant in the monitoring process, stressed that 'the courts do not take into consideration victims' opinions. There is a lack of awareness. In most cases, women do not know the procedures, what they have to do, who they need to contact in order for their application to be accepted.'

The WLC Executive Director, Natalia Vilcu, said that this project was extremely important and that 'the findings and conclusions identified by the monitors will be used in the training of police officers, judges and prosecutors, as well as to improve the legal framework. 'We will work on drafting a new package of legislative amendments to align the existing norms to the provisions of the Istanbul Convention.'

Overall, 158 cases have been monitored at the Court of Appeals and the Chisinau District Court. The monitoring revealed the degree of the justice system's accountability to citizens and its concern for

the citizens' interests. Experts' conclusions and recommendations will be aggregated in a report that the WLC intends to publish and launch in the second half of the year.

The following issues have been identified by the monitors:

- Victims do not know their rights and do not know what papers they sign. When they get into court, they are confused. It is necessary to conduct public lessons and information sessions for them.
- Some judges, prosecutors and court secretaries have stereotyped thinking. According to them, the victim should have a certain type of behaviour, implying a suffering and subdued face. It turns out to be a double, even triple victimisation.

Courts monitoring activity in the Republic of Moldova is part of "Strengthening Capacities of Prosecution and Judicial Response to Domestic Violence in Moldova" Project, supported by the US Embassy in Moldova.

Detainees from Penitentiary No. 7 - Rusca are Now More Empowered



One year ago, the Women's Law Centre initiated collaboration with the Penitentiary No. 7 - Rusca. It was a pilot project aimed at empowering women in detention, providing them access to information about their rights, offering them legal counselling, including representation in courts and, last but not least, offering psychological support. A team of two psychologists and a lawyer went there weekly to discuss, analyze and, where possible, intervene with concrete actions. The WLC team did not know how women would react and how much they would allow us into their world. The interest of these women and testimonies revealed during the informing sessions confirmed that we managed to meet their needs.

'When you are in prison, all you want is to serve the sentence as quickly as possible and be back with your family. Many of us have suffered for years, have been beaten and humiliated a whole life, and when you get here, you feel your world collapsing. Thank you for bringing us back the hope, for helping us see the light at the end of the tunnel,' confessed a project beneficiary.

The piloting phase of the project ended with issuing a brochure - **Practical Guide for Women in Detention**, containing answers to many legal and psychological questions. It was distributed to each beneficiary on 8 March. On that day we found ourselves spectators at the International Women's Day concert. The celebration atmosphere was complemented by the WLC representatives' message of encouragement to women: to get informed, to know and fight for their rights. The guide developed by professionals, based on weekly interactions with women in the penitentiary, is as a primary source of information for them.

The first phase of the project 'Enhancing access to justice, legal aid and psychological support to women in detention' was finalized in 2017 and was implemented with the support of the Swiss Cooperation Office in Moldova. In 2018, activities are carried out with the support of the Embassy of Sweden in Moldova and include new elements, such as art and reading therapy sessions.

The Economic Empowerment Project Makes Dreams Come True

The economic empowerment of our beneficiaries is a project we care a lot about and are happy with its good results. It's a real pleasure to see them motivated and prepared to invest in personal studies and development, to follow their dreams and never give up. The

project supported by the International Women's Club ends in May. Before we come up with a more detailed presentation of the key achievements, we would like to share you some great experiences of the girls and women participating in the program:



Ana has learned to create, combine colors, give free rein to imagination, and overcome her own limits. Handmade relaxes her and helps her persevere. Guided by a mentor, Ana wants to sell her creations one day.

Ana, mother of three children, has started a small business of poultry breeding. Ana wants her three children to get education, and for her to reach a stage when she can help others.



Cristina proudly wore the robe of the Technology College graduate and her first pieces of clothing were presented to the public. It's a long way to go, but her determination makes us believe that it will be a road filled with beautiful achievements.

Victoria is a young entrepreneur who makes clothes for pre-term newborns. A sewing machine was purchased to help her develop her business. She participated for the first time at the Christmas Charity Bazaar, organized by the International Women's Club of Moldova, where she could sell her garments, but also establish relations with potential customers.

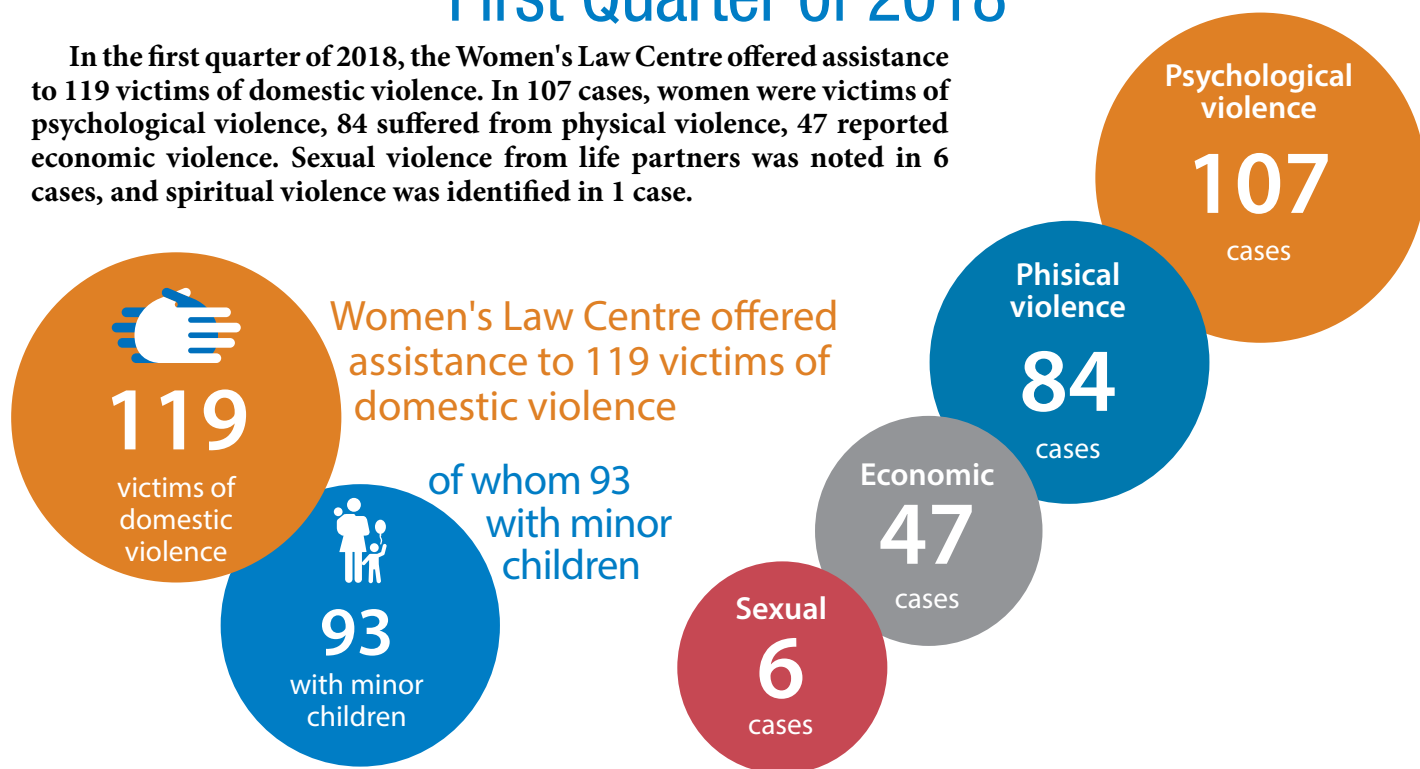


Viorica decided to attend the therapeutic and pediatric massage courses and, once completed, start working on her own. In April she received the certificate for the successfully completed first-level course.

WLC ACTIVITY IN FIGURES

First Quarter of 2018

In the first quarter of 2018, the Women's Law Centre offered assistance to 119 victims of domestic violence. In 107 cases, women were victims of psychological violence, 84 suffered from physical violence, 47 reported economic violence. Sexual violence from life partners was noted in 6 cases, and spiritual violence was identified in 1 case.



Type of provided services:

Primary legal aid: Victims received primary legal aid in 71 cases, such as preparing applications and complains addressed to law enforcement bodies or appealing against decisions of the official examiner. A number of 22 protection orders were issued.

Qualified legal aid: Lawyers were appointed to represent victims' interests in 22 cases. A number of 2 criminal cases, 3 administrative offence cases, 7 civil cases were registered, such as applications for divorce, establishing the domicile of minors, collection of alimony, forced hospitalisation.

Psychological assistance: A total of 55 victims received individual psychological assistance, including long-term psychological assistance in 5 cases. A number of 19 psychological evaluation

reports were drafted.

Social assistance: 34 victims were provided social assistance - social counselling and vocational guidance. In 3 cases the victim was placed in a placement centre.

Beneficiaries' social profile:

Area of residence: 86 victims are from the urban area and 33 from the rural one. Most of them have their domicile in Chisinau municipality. People from other districts also asked for help, specifically from: Anenii Noi, Calarasi, Cantemir, Cimislia, Drochia, Edinet, Falesti, Hincesti, Orhei, Soroca, Stefan-Voda, Ungheni.

Age: Most domestic violence victims are 25-34 years old, followed by +65 year old and 34-44 years old beneficiaries.

Education: 99 victims have secondary education, while 20 have higher education.

Occupational status: 80 women are unemployed or have their work suspended due to the childcare leave. At the same time, 38 employed victims were registered. 93 are mothers caring for their minor children.

Victims contacted the WLC being advised by police officers, social workers, lawyers, psychologists, maternity centres staff, other organizations working in the field, former WLC beneficiaries, or by email.

A total of 1498 domestic violence victims have been assisted since 2012.

INSPIRING STORIES

'I live now a new life with my children and I am happy'



Ana's story resembles that of hundreds of Moldovan women, who, for the sake of their children, because of shame or fear of the man, endure domestic violence for years. It was a classic scenario, she was first beaten in less than a week after the wedding, continuing with daily humiliations and jealousy scenes. She had endured this for 12 years. During this period she gave birth to three children. For their sake, she was giving him a chance today, tomorrow until the last drop, or rather, the last beating filled-up the glass and she decided to divorce.

'The decision to divorce was the most important in my life. I'm thinking with horror what I've been through. There were times when I had to give last money for his cigarettes or a bottle of wine, while I and children would stay hungry. He was even stealing eggs from the hen's nest and exchanging them for alcohol.'

In conversations with a friend, Ana found out about the Women's Law Centre and decided to ask for help. 'I wanted to remove all the negative from my life. I was afraid of his reaction. He has always threatened me and told me that I would not live without him even for five minutes. More than that, I had to face my fear. At the centre they lis-

tened to my story, offered me psychological support, and helped me obtain a protective order. I went to the police, afterwards he was forced to leave and was no longer allowed to approach me and the children for more than 300 meters.'

Ana started a new life, where smile and hope have their place to be. She is cheerful, full of confidence and strength, and her eyes express happiness.

'It has been a year since I live alone. I live another life. With the three wonderful children I have, we laugh, joke, play, we are not afraid of anyone. I urge all women not to endure domestic violence, be courageous and ask for help.'

One will not hear Ana complaining that it's hard and that she does not know what she is going to do tomorrow. She is a kind of person who does much out of little. Half a year ago, she was included into the economic empowerment program, implemented by the WLC, and gradually developed a small business of poultry breeding. The centre helped her buy hens, and now it's already known in her village that Ana sells eggs. It is an extra income she can support her family. Ana wants her three children to get education, and for her to be able to help others in need.

'Thinking of what would I change in my life... A lot, I think. First, I would study, I would make a career. I want a different life for my three children. I'm working for a better future and I keep away from people who talk much and do little. I think one can change things no matter the age. Even if you are 17 or 50, you can take it all over and be proud of yourself and your life.'

Without knowing, Ana inspires other women by her way of being. She serves as an example that things can change if you ask for help and have the courage to rewrite your story.



NEWS IN BRIEF

The Women's Law Centre has a new head office

In April this year, the Women's Law Centre changed its head office. The new location is better adapted to the needs of our beneficiaries and their children. A room has been arranged exclusively for legal and social counselling, where the WLC specialists will continue providing the information, assistance and support necessary to victims of domestic violence.

We are settled on 87 Kogalniceanu Street, opposite the Museum of Ethnography and Natural History. The new contact number is 022 811 999, while other contact data did not change.

We look forward to your visit!

The Women's Law Centre was nominated for the Courage Award within an international competition

Women's Law Centre reached to the finals of the Grassroots Justice Prize international contest, being among the ten finalists nominated for the Courage Award category.

The contest highlights the value of organizations which, by means of their activities, 'place' the power of law in the hands of people and help them claim their rights, understand how the law works, who they should ask for protection, and who should help them.

At the same time, more information about the Centre's activity can be accessed on an interactive map, thought by developers as a 'light of hope', where people can see the activities performed by different organisations around the world.

Young people from Mondo Studio Art are curious to know more about domestic violence

We prevent domestic violence and violence against women by discussing with young people from Mondo Studio Art. Our lawyer colleagues told them how they can understand whether or not they are victims of domestic violence, what stereotypes prevent us from talking about domestic violence, what is the profile of the victims and why it is extremely important to continue their studies and to be financially independent.

We are glad that educational institutions welcome such initiatives and care for students to be informed.

WE TAKE ATTITUDE BECAUSE WE CARE

The Women's Law Centre sustained the Declaration of Mothers who Suffered from the Medical Services Provided in Moldova, expressing its dissatisfaction with the deplorable quality of the services provided in perinatal medicine.

The appeal was supported by more than 30 non-governmental organi-

sations and encompass stories of 98 women who talked about their experiences when they were refused or delayed in being offered emergency health care; were asked to pay for the medical services that are free under the law; were humiliated, disregarded and discriminated on different grounds by health workers, including when they asked for more information about the

treatment they underwent.

The appeal was addressed to the Prime Minister, Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection, National Anti-Corruption Centre, Office of the Ombudsperson, health professionals, NGOs, diplomatic institutions, media and the general public.



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 18 non-governmental organizations and public institutions active in preventing and combating domestic violence and violence against women.

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