



**WOMEN'S
LAW CENTRE**

Advancing women's rights together

ANNUAL REPORT 2019



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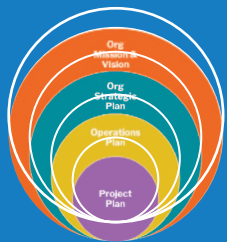
Women's Law Centre (WLC) is a non-governmental organisation established by a group of women-lawyers from Moldova. WLC advocates for equality between women and men in public and family life and contributes to preventing and combating domestic violence and gender-based violence against women.

WLC MISSION

To contribute to promoting gender equality and preventing and combating violence against women in the Republic of Moldova by raising public awareness, building the capacity of relevant stakeholders, providing holistic services to assist and protect women, conducting research and analysis, monitoring the legislation and aligning it with international standards.



Women's Law Center's work in 2019 was based on the **2019-2024 Strategic Development Plan**. It rests on four pillars: prevention, protection, research-based policies, and organisational development.



New 2019-2024 Strategic Development Plan approved

1

2

2019 Award for Equality of the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality



Analysis of compatibility of national legislation with the Istanbul Convention presented

3

4

Draft law on the ratification of the Istanbul Convention approved by the Government



Standard operating procedures for doctors and social workers approved

5



Free helpline for victims of domestic violence functional

7

8

Analysis of GBV indicators in the health sector launched



Access to justice of women in detention ensured

9

10

Complaints with the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality filed



Our gratitude goes to the main donors:
Embassy of Sweden, OAK Foundation, US Embassy, UN Women Moldova, and UNFPA Moldova.



WHAT WE STRIVE TO ACHIEVE

STRATEGIC OUTCOME 1.

Domestic violence is prevented by reducing tolerance to this phenomenon

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME 1.1.

Raise public awareness of the severity of violence against women and of domestic violence

HOW DO WE DO THIS?

● Advocating for ratification of the Istanbul Convention

- ✓ Participated and spoke at public hearings of the Parliamentary Commission for Social Protection, Health and Family to promote the ratification of the Istanbul Convention.
- ✓ Keynote speakers at the national conference on preventing and combating violence against women – the Istanbul Convention of the Council of Europe, organised by the Council of Europe in Moldova and the Embassy of France in Moldova.
- ✓ Contributed to the public call of the National Coalition ‘Life Without Domestic Violence’ that urged the national authorities to ratify the Istanbul Convention and to ensure the full alignment of the national legislation with the provisions and standards of the Convention. Over 100 organisations and individuals signed and supported the call.
- ✓ Joined along with tens of other organisations the protest against exclusion from the Government meeting agenda of the ratification of the Istanbul Convention.
- ✓ On December 27, 2019, the Government approved the draft law Ratifying the Istanbul Convention.





● Raising public awareness and the ‘16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence’ Campaign

- ✓ Awareness-raising meetings through the Novateca network of libraries for 96 women, men, young people, professionals, as well as social workers and psychologists from Ungheni, Cahul, Calarasi and Drochia.
- ✓ Awareness-raising events for the students of the Faculty of Law of Moldova State University, who debated the legal and psychological aspects of the domestic violence phenomenon. The WLC lawyer and psychologist challenged young people to think beyond gender stereotypes and to invest in harmonious relationships based on respect.
- ✓ We were happy to share the ‘Don’t Blame the Clothes!’ symbol exhibition with our partners and colleagues during the ‘16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence’ Campaign. The stories and reconstructed clothing of nine women and girls who suffered sexual violence were exhibited in the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova and inside a theatre, where a performance about gender-based violence was played.
- ✓ Throughout 2014-2018, 144 women died in the Republic of Moldova as a consequence of domestic violence. In their memory, we inaugurated in Valea Morilor Park a dandelion-shaped sculpture that symbolises the fragility of the lives of women experiencing violence.





● Participating in national and international level events

- ✓ We provided input to the annual WAVE Fempower magazine – *Tackling violence against women in Europe – achievements of the last 25 years*, a retrospective report about the actions conducted in the Republic of Moldova to eradicate the domestic violence phenomenon.
- ✓ We participated in meetings of the Inter-ministerial Coordination Council for Preventing and Combating of Domestic Violence.
- ✓ We met with the members of the WAVE network at the 21st WAVE Conference – ‘25 Years of Defending Women’s Human Rights: Milestones and Visions for the Future’.
- ✓ Alongside more than 100 participants from seven countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Romania and Ukraine, we were part of the ‘Beijing+25’ sub-regional consultations to discuss achievements and further steps after almost 25 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
- ✓ We participated in the JUSTRAC Symposium promoting the rule of law in the post-soviet region through governmental and non-governmental collaboration. The symposium hosted up to 40 experts from Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, who explored the prospects of NGOs to act as agents of change and beneficiaries of a consolidated rule of law.
- ✓ We attended the meetings and the consultative planning activities organised by UNFPA, under the global program on essential services for women and girls subjected to violence, where we presented the experience of Moldova in adjusting the national standard operating procedures for social workers and doctors to the package of essential services for women and girls subjected to gender-based violence.





INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME 1.2.

Building the capacity of professionals

HOW DO WE DO THIS?

- ✓ **Building the capacity of judges and prosecutors.** The training manual on implementation of the legislation in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence was developed and launched in partnership with the National Institute of Justice.
- ✓ Trainings for justice sector representatives. **60** judges and prosecutors, **7** investigative officers and **74** judges' assistants, prosecutors' advisers and court secretaries, participated in capacity building programs.
- ✓ Summer school for judges and prosecutors. Together with the experts from Global Rights for Women we organised a summer school for **28** judges and prosecutors who debated the principles of response of the justice sector institutions, the role of coordinated response, the risk assessment, the peculiarities of investigation of cases and criminal law aspects in preventing and combating domestic violence.
- ✓ Educational videos to be used in training judges and prosecutors to highlight the victim-centred approach.





- ✓ **Enhancing the knowledge of forensic medical staff.** In partnership with the Medical Forensic Centre, we trained 51 assistants to forensic doctors. The participants discussed about the stereotypes accompanying the phenomenon of domestic violence, the profiles of victims and perpetrators, specific legal aspects and the response of the health system to such cases.
- ✓ **Strengthening the knowledge of women in police.** The participants acquired a better understanding of such concepts as sexual harassment and its forms, what the law provides and how of the legal remedies for victims of sexual harassment are.
- ✓ **Training for journalists.** A group of 16 journalists from local and national print media discussed stereotypes and inequalities, estimated the costs of the phenomenon of violence, analysed cases of violence and identified the topics later covered in journalistic materials.
- ✓ **Building the capacity of police officers.** We continued our partnership with the General Police Inspectorate and trained 85 police officers in providing efficient response to cases of domestic violence. The training was aimed at changing the attitude of the police towards the domestic violence phenomenon. At the same time, 18 police trainers strengthened their knowledge on coordinated community response, and developed their skills in identifying primary perpetrators and assessing the lethality risks in cases of domestic violence. The participants were guided by international experts from Global Rights for Women.
- ✓ **Analysing cases of death as a result of domestic violence.** In partnership with Global Rights for Women, we conducted a workshop on good practices for 40 representatives of public institutions and non-government organisations from the Republic of Moldova, who analysed the possibility to establish a Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee.





WHAT WE STRIVE TO ACHIEVE

STRATEGIC OUTCOME 2.

Victims of domestic violence are better protected, while the abusers are punished

HOW DO WE DO THIS?

In 2019, the Women's Law Centre provided support to **558 women**. Their number increased by **36%** as compared to 2018. In order to make our services more accessible, we created a free helpline for legal counseling of domestic violence victims and continued to provide primary and qualified legal aid, social assistance, including economic empowerment and psychological counseling. We also organised thematic handmade workshops for the beneficiaries of the centre, so that women and their children could feel supported in all aspects of daily life.

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME 2.1.

Victims of violence against women and domestic violence avail of provided specialised assistance

1. LEGAL AID FOR WOMEN

The number of our beneficiaries is increasing every year, and more and more of those who contact us are from rural areas. About **64%** of our beneficiaries live in urban areas, while **36%** – in rural areas. The number of women from rural areas increased by **12%** compared to 2018. This is an encouraging trend, given that the incidence of domestic violence is higher in villages.

We provided qualified legal aid and representation before the courts in **38 cases**. The judges issued **9 sentences**, while **94%** of the applications filed by WLC for obtaining protection orders were accepted by the judges. The total amount paid as non-pecuniary and pecuniary damage in the cases managed by WLC was **MDL 78,234.00**.



2. STRATEGIC LITIGATION

We filed **6 complaints** with the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality. The Council found discrimination in **3 cases**, while **3 other cases** are still pending. The Council found discrimination on the ground of sex in victim's access to justice and equal protection before the law, discrimination on the ground of sex and marital status in employment, and discrimination through victimisation at workplace.

3. PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

We provided psychological assistance to **159 women and their children**. About **72 beneficiaries** received short-term psychological counseling, while **22** received long-term psychological assistance. **65 psychological evaluation reports** were issued, while **25 women** who requested WLC services received emergency care, including food for their children. We provided social assistance to **63 women**. They were counseled on benefits, child support or material aid from the state. **9** women received career guidance and **14** women were helped to find a place to live during periods of crisis.

4. THEMATIC WORKSHOPS FOR OUR BENEFICIARIES

We organised **six thematic workshops** for the beneficiaries of the Centre aimed to help them develop handmade skills. Some women transformed these skills in a lifestyle and they even managed to sell some of their works at the Annual Christmas Fair.





WHAT WE STRIVE TO ACHIEVE

STRATEGIC OUTCOME 3.

Comprehensive and co-ordinated policies adopted and implemented

HOW DO WE DO THIS?

In 2019, we continued the open dialogue with the Government and local public authorities on the policies in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence and violence against women. We conducted an analysis of compatibility of the national legislation with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention and advocated for ensuring the compliance of the laws to this European treaty. We advocated for the introduction of new GBV indicators in the health system and coordinated the development and piloting of standard operating procedures for social workers and doctors in their response to domestic violence cases.





INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME 3.1.

Legal and policy framework aligned with the international standards

- ✓ **Draft law harmonising the national legislation with Istanbul Convention.** Following the analysis of compatibility of national legislation with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention, the MHLSP created an inter-ministerial working group to develop a draft law to harmonise the national legislation with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention. In 2019, WLC facilitated eight meetings of the working group. The meetings were attended by representatives of state institutions and NGOs. The key legislative amendments discussed targeted the Criminal Code, Criminal Procedure Code, Civil Procedure Code, Enforcement Code, Law No 45 on Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence.
- ✓ **Shadow report to the CEDAW Committee.** We developed the shadow report for the list of issues to the CEDAW Committee in relation to the sixth periodic report submitted by the Republic of Moldova. With inputs from several members of the National Coalition 'Life without Domestic Violence', the report was one of the sources for the Committee's list of questions to the Moldovan Government. We also coordinated the group of several members of the National Coalition 'Life without Domestic Violence' and developed the shadow report for the 75th session of the CEDAW Committee to take place in February 2020.
- ✓ **Communications to the Department of Execution of ECtHR Judgments.** The aim of the communications was to provide alternative information about the execution of general measures in the case T.M. and C.M. vs Republic of Moldova. As a result, the Committee of Ministers will continue to supervise by March 2021 the implementation by the Republic of Moldova of general measures.





INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME 3.2.

Mechanism of coordinated response created and implemented

- ✓ We worked in partnership with the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, to develop and pilot sectoral standard operating procedures for social workers and doctors. The procedures were piloted in five districts and based on the feedback received, we presented a report on the monitoring of piloting the standard operating procedures. In 2019, the procedures for social workers and doctors were approved by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection.
- ✓ Also in 2019, we initiated the development of the mechanism of coordinated response to cases of domestic violence. We will continue to promote the idea of a coordinated response in 2020. The ownership of key public authorities over the process is a must.

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME 3.3.

The results of researches are used for advocacy efforts

- ✓ We continued to conduct researches and analyses to have strong evidence to refer to in our dialogue with the national authorities. In April 2019, we presented the key findings of the report on compatibility of the national legislation with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention. GREVIO member, Ms. Aleid van den Brink, also attended the event. The expert talked about the purpose, standards and key principles of the Istanbul Convention.
- ✓ In partnership with the Center for Health Policy and Research (PAS) we developed and launched a report that assesses the statistical indicators from the Moldovan health system in terms of sexual health, reproductive health and gender-based violence. The introduction of new indicators on domestic violence will allow to improve the coordinated response between police, social workers and doctors in cases of domestic violence; ensure targeted implementation of projects to prevent domestic violence and last but not least, will bring us closer to the implementation of the provisions of the Istanbul Convention.





WHAT WE STRIVE TO ACHIEVE

STRATEGIC OUTCOME 4.

Women in detention have access to justice and psychological assistance

1. LEGAL AID FOR WOMEN IN DETENTION

In 2019, we continued to implement the project for women in Penitentiary No 7 – Rusca. WLC lawyers provided **legal counselling** services to **149 women** in detention. Women learned about a range of legal issues related to domestic violence, child custody, divorce, preparing the file for representation in the court, preparing the needed file for release on parole. During the reporting period, with the support of WLC lawyers, **six women** were **released on parole** and the issues related to visiting their children, requalification of criminal offences and appeal to higher level courts were solved.

2. PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING FOR WOMEN IN DETENTION

Psychologists provided counselling to **15 women** in Rusca Prison. Most of them had eight individual sessions. This support helped them overcome multiple traumas, overwhelming feelings and prolonged state of sadness or pain. The most frequent issues women spoke about were the total lack of trust, lack of hope and the struggle to envision their future. As a result of the individual psychological counselling sessions, women survivors of domestic violence/sexual abuse reported improvement of their psycho-emotional condition.

3. ART THERAPY FOR A BETTER PSYCHO-EMOTIONAL CONDITION

We managed to provide them a different way of interaction through art activities and reading club, which were attended by 10-15 women each. The activities helped them restore their emotional balance, learn constructive ways of expressing emotions, and revive their perception of their own personality.

4. TRAINING OF PRISON EMPLOYEES

Together with the team of psychologists and lawyers, we organised the ‘Women in detention: special rights and needs’ training for the employees of Penitentiary No. 7 – Rusca. Participants identified the best practices in establishing and maintaining contact with the family, found solutions to the specific needs of the groups with multiple vulnerabilities, discussed reintegration, access to justice and psychological support for women in detention.

5. LAUNCHING BEST PRACTICES GUIDE FOR PRISON STAFF

We developed, in partnership with the National Prison Administration, a Good Practices Guideline for prison staff. The Guideline aimed to strengthen the capacity of the employees of the penitentiary system to respond to the special needs of women deprived of liberty.



WHAT DO WE STRIVE TO ACHIEVE

STRATEGIC OUTCOME 5.

WLC has the capacity to contribute to reducing domestic violence phenomenon

HOW DO WE DO THIS?

We continued the development of the organisation by maximising the team’s potential, increasing its efficiency and effectiveness, promoting the organisational values and culture within the team. We invested in the team members’ capacity building, while financial sustainability and diversification of funding sources was one of our key strategic priorities throughout 2019.

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME 5.1.

Internal processes and regulations are improved and applied

We continued to invest in developing and streamlining our internal management and control processes. In order to protect better the rights and interests of the children we interact with, we developed and approved the Child Safeguarding Policy. To ensure that WLC has an eco-friendly approach in its daily operations, we developed an environmental policy to be approved by the Board in 2020.

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME 5.2.

WLC team is motivated and committed

In 2019, our team members attended 9 specialised trainings to consolidate their knowledge and skills in the area of their daily responsibilities. We continued the practice of organising training on stress management and developing the confidence of employees in their own internal forces and resources.

The year ended with an award that confirmed the importance of WLC activity. The Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality selected us as the most proactive NGO and handed us the award for remarkable actions in preventing and combating discrimination and promoting equality between women and men in public and private life. We received the award at the 2019 Equality Awards Gala.

BUDGET OF 2019

Executed budget - USD 464 751,07



VISIBILITY AND MEDIA COVERAGE

- 8 participations in TV and radio shows
- More than 10 appearances on online platforms
- More than 300 monthly visitors on the WLC website
- 2.608 followers on Facebook
- 1 public awareness event with national media coverage in over 15 media sources

WLC TEAM

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WLC PARTNERS

GOVERNMENTAL

- General Prosecutor’s Office • National Institute of Justice •
- Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection • Ministry of Internal Affairs • Ministry of Justice •
- General Police Inspectorate • National Administration of Penitentiaries •
- Forensic Medical Centre •

NON-GOVERNMENTAL

- Members of the National Coalition ‘Life without Domestic Violence’ • Gender Equality Platform •
- East Europe Foundation • SOCIOPOLIS Investigation and Advisory Center •
- ‘Partnership for Development’ Centre • Institute for Family and Social Initiatives •
- Reproductive Health Training Centre • Global Rights for Women • Women Against Violence Europe •

FUNDERS

OAK Foundation, Embassy of Sweden, US Embassy, UN Women Moldova, and UNFPA Moldova.



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