

STOP VIOLENCE

NEWSLETTER

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WOMEN'S LAW CENTER

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MOLDOVAN LEGISLATION AND PROVISIONS OF THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION – HOW COMPATIBLE ARE THEY?

On 18 April 2019, the Women's Law Centre launched the Analysis of the compatibility of the national legislation with the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. The event was held on the platform of the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Council in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence within the MoHLSP and brought together representatives of non-governmental organizations, international community and authorities responsible for preventing and combating domestic violence.

“After the first round of analysis carried out between 2009-2010, a number of legislative amendments were proposed that contributed to improve the protection mechanism of the victim of domestic violence, to diversify specialized services, to establish a free hotline, to improve

multi-disciplinary response in cases of domestic violence. The second round of analysis, which is taking place now, will contribute to prepare the country for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention” stated Viorica Dumbraveanu, State Secretary, MoHLSP, during the event.

All the member countries of the Council of Europe face specific challenges regarding the implementation of the Istanbul Convention - some of them relate to the access to adequate specialized services, incomplete legislation, insufficient funding, limited financial resources allocated for specialized services and the lack or incomplete presence of statistical data. “What is important to bear in mind, however, is that domestic violence can only be eradicated in a coordinated manner between all relevant actors”, said Aleid van den Brink, GREVIO member.





The international partners attending the event also encouraged the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, given that this treaty would bring more guarantees to victims of domestic violence. “We appreciate the efforts and results achieved by Moldova to align with international standards in preventing and combating domestic violence. The domestic violence directly affects the society by diminishing the development opportunities and slows down the economic growth. We

should all be persistent in our work to support the victims of domestic violence and help the whole society to progress”, said Adam Amberg, the representative of the Swedish Embassy in the Republic of Moldova.

“The authors of the report analyzed 62 articles of the Convention and came up with recommendations on ensuring a coordinated response to cases of domestic violence, establishing an efficient system of reporting and referring cases to specialized assistance and protection services. The discussions with the authorities, as well as the analysis of peculiarities of application of the relevant legislation, revealed such issues as the refusal of the law enforcement bodies to start the criminal prosecution, in particular, in the cases of psychological and economic violence. We have a lot of work to do in this respect, so that the victims subjected to these forms of violence receive the necessary support”, said Natalia Vilcu, Executive Director, Women’s Law Centre.

This is the second analysis carried out with the support of the Women’s Law Center. The first one was developed in 2013. The analysis was developed at the request and with the support of the MoHLSP and the financial support of UN Women Moldova and Sweden.



THE WOMEN'S LAW CENTER ORGANIZED A TRAINING OF TRAINERS COURSE FOR POLICE OFFICERS



Between 25 and 27 June 2019, the training of trainers course was held for the police officers who respond to cases of domestic violence. 20 participants had the opportunity to strengthen their knowledge on the coordinated community response; to develop skills to identify primary perpetrators; to assess the lethality risks and to learn the adult learning principles.

The lead trainers, Mark and Valerie Wynn, professionals with over 40 years of experience, shared best response practices, including lessons learned from their own mistakes. “We must admit that we made mistakes. During the training we discuss the models that did not work,

and then we analyze what has been successfully implemented. In this regard, we strongly encourage self-evaluation. The police officers should look with a critical eye and see what has worked well all these years and where is their responsibility to correct”, said Mark Wynn, trainer.

The training also explained very well the psychological perspectives of the issue of domestic violence. “You cannot separate physical violence from psychological violence. Even if you help a victim reach a safe space, rebuild his/her life, psychological trauma will remain. Unfortunately, these traumas cannot be seen immediately, as opposed to physical injuries”, said Valerie Wynn, trainer in the training of trainers.





Viorica Condorachi has been working in police for over 20 years. She is a senior officer at the Cahul Police Inspectorate. She encounters many cases of domestic violence in her practice. The training motivated her to be active. “The examples from the trainers’ experience, including the reports on how we should deal with the victims of domestic violence, were useful. I have decided to use the interviewing methods learned here. The questions describe the case very well and it will be

easier for us to qualify the actions of the perpetrators. Such trainings are very useful for my colleagues as well, they would help them to change their views on the parties involved in the conflict, to overcome the prejudices and myths that are specific to us as a society”, said Viorica.

The colleagues from Global Rights for Women, an organization that has been close to WLC for several years and supports the changes made by the Republic of Moldova in the field of domestic violence, also contributed to the organization of this training. In 2012, the first training of trainers group among the police officers was trained. Some of them support the WLC in the training activities organized for police officers. And in this case, at the end of the course, the participants received certificates that give them the opportunity to get involved in training as trainers.

The event was held with the support offered by UN Women Moldova and Sweden and the collaboration with the General Police Inspectorate, in particular, the General Division for Public Security and the General Division for Criminal Investigation.



CASES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESULTING IN THE DEATH OF VICTIMS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WITHIN A SPECIALIZED COMMISSION



The Women's Law Center, in partnership with Global Rights for Women, USA, conducted a workshop on good practices regarding the establishment and operation of the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee. For two days, US experts, along with the representatives of public institutions and non-government organizations in the Republic of Moldova, analyzed the good practices and the possibility of establishing a Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee in Moldova.

"We appreciate your efforts in examining your own legislative system at national and local level, in cooperating with law enforcement bo-

dies and civil society and in identifying the additional steps required for the protection of the most vulnerable citizens. This is the spirit of a fatality review committee – taking steps to improve the system for the benefit of the citizens and to learn more about these crimes and victims" said Martin McDowell, Chargé d'Affaires of the United States Mission in Chisinau.

At the international level, such committees represent an effective practice to promote cooperation, communication and coordination between the institutions empowered to respond to cases of domestic violence; to identify the reasons for the deaths and the system gaps that did not ensure effective protection of the victims, as well as the solutions to remove these gaps.

"During the last three years together with my colleagues I have participated and organized several information and awareness-raising campaigns throughout the country from Soroca to Cahul. We support the initiative to establish this committee and we believe that a mechanism



is needed to examine thoroughly all cases of domestic violence. We should understand that the issue of domestic violence is not the problem of the victim, but of the whole society”, said Doina Gherman, Member of Parliament, Chair of the Committee on Human Rights and Inter-ethnic Relations.

At the same time, Dorin Purice, General State Secretary, MIA, said that “all the stakeholders involved in preventing this issue are obliged to strengthen their efforts. This event gives us the opportunity to learn the experience of the US colleagues and to take over best practices in the field. I hope that the proposals made will be materialized both at the legislative, executive and civil society level.”

According to the statistical data provided by the General Police Inspectorate, in 2018 there were 30 cases of murder committed by a family member and 24 deaths that occurred as a result of acts of domestic violence.

“The incidence of violence cases is increasing. There are prevention mechanisms such as the restriction order, the protection order, but they represent short-term achievements. We are aware that the consequences of violence affect families and the whole society, having detrimental effects and implying long-term costs”, specified Viorica Dumbră-

veanu, State Secretary, MoHLSP, during the workshop.

According to experts, when assessing cases of domestic violence resulting in death it is necessary to take into account criteria such as the chronology of events, the type of violence, the reported risk indicators, the institutions involved, the degree of communication and coordination between them and what could have been done to improve general and community response.

“The operation of the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee at national level should ensure greater efficiency of the response in the cases of domestic violence by all institutions dealing with this issue.

We hope that this workshop will provide the basis required for the establishment in the Republic of Moldova of the mechanism to identify the deficiencies in the response system and to remedy them, but also to collect and present data on the cases resulting in the death of the victims of domestic violence”, said Natalia Vilcu, Director of the Women’s Law Center.

The workshop was organized by WLC in partnership with Global Rights for Women with the financial support of the Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement Section of the US Embassy in Moldova, through the ‘Strengthen the response capacities of the prosecutor’s office and the judicial system in cases of domestic violence in Moldova’ Program.



LAWYERS ARE TRAINED IN THE FIELD OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



About 20 lawyers strengthened their knowledge of the dynamics and causes of the domestic violence, types of domestic violence and risk factors of repeated abuse and lethality. At the same time, the trainers of Global Rights for Women presented best practices and recommendations for determining the primary perpetrator, recognizing the signs of domestic violence, psycho-social profile of the perpetrator and the victim, tactics of defending the victims accused of committing acts of domestic violence.

The participants were guided in analyzing the dilemma situations and were involved in interactive exercises. They came up with ideas and solutions, showing active interest and critical thinking.

The training conducted in partnership with the Lawyers Training Center contributed also to changing the perspective and behavior of the specialists towards victims, improving the nature and quality of the support provided to victims. According to NBS data, 63.4% of women and girls had experienced at least one form of physical, psychological or sexual violence over their lifetime, from the age of fifteen.

The event was supported by the US Embassy in Moldova.



JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS ATTENDED THE SUMMER SCHOOL ON THE ROLE OF JUDICIAL INSTITUTIONS IN RESPONDING TO CASES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



Between 22-24 July, Women's Law Center in partnership with the National Institute of Justice and Global Rights for Women organized the summer school on the role of judges and prosecutors in responding to cases of domestic violence. 28 participants discussed the principles of response of the justice sector institutions, the role of the coordinated response, the risk assessment and finding, the peculiarities of investigation of cases and criminal law aspects in preventing and combating domestic violence.

At the same time, the information was strengthened through exercises and role play. In the attached photos, the judges and prosecutors got into the role of a domestic violence victim aged 35, with three children. The situations were formulated in such a way that they had to constantly look for solutions to get out of the circle of violence and they could "feel" what it is like to have no money to rent a flat, to no longer be able to benefit from placement services, to stay homeless or come back to the perpetrator because of the threats to never see children.

What emotions did they feel? - of uncertainty and fear, some felt threatened, others determined to leave when the violence directly affected the children. These are exactly the situations which the victims of domestic violence go through and find themselves helpless, face to face with the perpetrator, if the officials of the responsible institutions do not properly respond.

The summer school was organized with the support of the Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement Section of the US Embassy in Moldova.



JOURNALISTS HAVE LEARNED TO PROPERLY ADDRESS ISSUES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Guided by trainers, a group of 16 journalists from local and national print media discussed the stereotypes and inequalities, estimated the costs of the phenomenon, analyzed many cases of violence, revealing its multiple facets. The expert Alina Radu, director of the Ziarul de Garda (ZdG) weekly newspaper, stated that violence is widespread in the Republic of Moldova, but the topic is often passed over in silence. “Violence exists not only in socially vulnerable families. And after high fences there is a lot of violence that is little discussed. This is where the role of the journalist comes in – to sound the alarm and to inform the society. If we were to ask why women endure violence, then the answer would be simple: because we, the journalists, did not tell them that there is another way”, said Alina Radu.



Together with Lidia Gorceag, psychologist at the Center for Assistance and Protection of Domestic Violence Victims, the journalists analyzed the psychological profile of the victim and the perpetrator, examined the reasons that generate domestic violence, its forms of expression and tried to debunk a number of myths related to violence. The psychologist recommended to journalists to have a discreet attitude towards the victims of domestic violence so as not to cause new emotional scars.



On the second day of the training, the legal aspects of this issue were discussed. The WLC lawyer, Arina Turcan, and the representative of the General Police Inspectorate, Ghenadie Neamtu, referred to the levers of influence on the perpetrators that the police officers have, but also to the actions that the victims have to take in order to denounce the violence.

In the participants' opinion, the training helped them to become more aware of their role in combating stereotypes and in preventing the forms of domestic violence.

"The training was an opportunity for us to learn the subtleties of an act of domestic violence and gave us tips on the correct, equidistant and discreet approach to these topics. And, we journalists should not forget that these topics involve people, and the way we present them publicly could affect their destinies. It is important not to make a sensation, but to try to get into the heart of the problem. Only in this way we can help identify solutions, break down stereotypes and raise awareness on the issue of domestic violence", said Tatiana Guzo, local correspondent for Radio Moldova, Anenii Noi.

'Domestic violence - how do we inform without causing harm?' training program was



held between 29 - 30 May 2019, being organized by WLC in collaboration with the Center for Independent Journalism and with the financial support of Sweden and OAK Foundation.

CONCRETE STEPS TOWARDS A COORDINATED RESPONSE TO CASES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- The meeting of validation of the 'Statistical indicators on sexual health, reproduction and gender-based violence in the health system of the Republic of Moldova' assessment report was held in July. The report implies an analysis of the indicators that are currently collected in the health system, but also contains an integrated list of the relevant indicators that are **proposed to be collected. Thus, for the field of domestic violence, the indicators recommended to be collected are of three categories:**

- general indicators on the health system's response to the phenomenon of violence
- statistical indicators on the identification, registration and assistance of the victims of violence in the health facilities
- indicators on gender-based violence collected from studies that will be conducted on the topic of violence.



The introduction of these indicators will allow to strengthen and improve the coordinated response between police, social workers and doctors in cases of domestic violence; will allow targeted implementation of projects to prevent domestic violence, based on the disaggregated data obtained and, last but not least, will bring us closer to the implementation of the provisions of the Istanbul Convention, a document to be ratified by the Republic of Moldova.

The report was prepared by the Women's Law Center, the 'Sociopolis' Research and Consulting Center and the Center for Health Analysis and Policy, with the financial support of UNFPA Moldova.



- The monitoring report on piloting the sectoral instructions in cases of domestic violence was presented at a meeting held at the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Protection. The representatives of the institutions from the three monitoring fields – police, social assistance and health, as well as the development partners working in this field, took part in the discussions. The findings of the report relate to the fact that:

- the response of the specialists in the cases of domestic violence is different, being determined by the actions taken previously in these areas
- the instructions for social workers and doctors will allow to gather evidence that can be used by the police in the courts
- specialized services, from which the domestic violence victims benefit for a longer period, are needed
- community members avoid getting involved in notifying/reporting cases of violence
- domestic violence victims are not informed about the existing assistance and protection services. Usually, they call for police intervention in crisis situations.



More details and also the recommendations included in the report can be found in the electronic version: <http://cdf.md/rom/resources/publicatii>

The activity was carried out by WLC at the request of the line ministry, with the support of SO-CIOPOLIS and the financial support of UNFPA Moldova.



SCJ DECISION SETTING A PRECEDENT

A beneficiary of WLC was subjected to sexual violence by her father. The Prosecutor's Office decided not to start the criminal prosecution on the grounds that the victim's statements had to be assessed with reservations because she suffered from health problems and could not properly perceive and describe sexual violence events.

WLC lawyer challenged the orders of the Prosecutor's Office as illegal and ungrounded, restricting the access of our beneficiary to justice. The court quashed the orders and ordered the Prosecutor's Office to remedy their violations. At the same time, WLC lodged a complaint with the Council on Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Ensuring Equality on the



basis of discrimination on grounds of disability and sex in the access to justice of the beneficiary of WLC. The Council fully allowed the WLC complaint and recommended that the Prosecutor General's Office take steps to prevent similar

breaches to be committed by prosecutors. Later on, the prosecutors challenged the Council's decision before the court, arguing that it was illegal and represented an interference with the Prosecutor's Office activity.

Recently, the Supreme Court of Justice upheld the Council's decision, arguing that regardless of the health status, people with disabilities could become victims of crimes and should enjoy equal protection before the law.

The perpetrator has now been convicted of domestic violence for 7 years of imprisonment, and for acts of sexual violence he could receive life imprisonment.

THE WOMEN'S LAW CENTER WITH CONTRIBUTION FROM COLLEAGUES FROM CIVIL SOCIETY PREPARED THE ALTERNATIVE REPORT ON THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA COMPLIANCE WITH THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

The findings include information obtained by reviewing the national legal framework in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence, analyzing relevant political documents, feedback of victims of gender-based violence and monitoring the implementation of national legislation by public authorities.

The report analyses issues such as access of victims to legal aid, punishments applied to the perpetrators and counselling programs for them, procedure for examining the Protection Order, report of cases of domestic violence by the professionals, support of victims of sexual violence and investigation of cases

of sexual violence, collection of statistical data, access to statistical information on the activity of authorities in preventing and combating domestic violence and ratification of the Istanbul Convention.

At the same time, a number of questions proposed for consideration by the Working Group from CEDAW 75 pre-session were formulated.

More details can be found in the report published on the website of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR] -

<https://bit.ly/2WQwIWa>

MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN IN POLICE FOR THE FIRST TIME PARTICIPATED IN A TRAINING REGARDING THE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



“An interactive training with new concepts and great trainers” - this is how the members of the Association of Women in Police described the training they attended during 24 - 25 April 2019. Together with the lawyer Arina Turcanu and psychologists Lilia Gorgeac and Sergiu Toma, the participants cleared up concepts such as sexual harassment and the forms it can take, what the law provides for and how we

should ensure protection and assistance to victims of sexual harassment.

“We are glad to have both trainers and AWP members acting as police officers in this training program. It is a mixed group that will allow us to pass on the knowledge obtained today to other colleagues as well. We want that the whole society understands that sexual violence has no excuse”, said Mariana Carabanov, LFS member.

Statistics show that one in five women employees is subjected to subtle forms of sexual harassment at work, 4 out of 100 face severe forms of harassment and only 15% of them have reported this.

During the training sessions, the Legal Guidelines in Cases of Sexual Harassment, developed by the WLC experts, was disseminated. The guidelines contain key information on this topic and explain step by step what measures the victim of gender-based violence should take.

The workshop was organized by WLC in partnership with AWP and with the financial support of Sweden and Oak Foundation.



EMPLOYEES OF THE RUSCA PENITENTIARY HAVE STRENGTHENED THEIR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE RIGHTS AND NEEDS OF WOMEN IN DETENTION



We previously told you about the reading and art therapy activities carried out for women from the Rusca Penitentiary. This time, together with the team of psychologists and lawyers, we have organized the 'Women in detention: special rights and needs' training for the employees of the penitentiary. Through role play, participants analyzed the causes and consequences of detention, the shock of detention, the impact on children and the community. At the same time, they reviewed hypothetical scenarios and presented response strategies to the challenges they face in their daily work.

One of the problems encountered by the women in detention is severance of the relationships with family members. This contributes to worsening of the emotional state, leading to the generation of con-

flicts both between the women prisoners and with the employees of the penitentiary. Therefore, during the training, the participants identified best practices in establishing and maintaining contact with the family, found solutions to the specific needs of the groups with multiple vulnerabilities, discussed how reintegration starts, how they ensure access to justice and psychological support for women in detention.

Another important issue addressed by the trainers was the familiarization of the penitentiary employees with the international standards and practices, the promotion and implementation of the Bangkok Rules in the Republic of Moldova. Adoption of the Bangkok Rules marks an important step towards recognizing the special needs of women in the criminal justice systems.

The training was organized in partnership with the National Administration of Penitentiaries of the Republic of Moldova and the Institute for Family and Social Initiatives, under 'Improving the access to justice, legal support and psychological help for women in detention' Project supported financially by Sweden.



PSYCHO-EMOTIONAL STATE OF WOMEN FROM RUSCA PENITENTIARY IMPROVED THROUGH THERAPEUTIC ACTIVITIES

During the June 2017 - June 2019 activities of psychological support through art therapy and the reading club and individual counseling for women prisoners, victims of domestic violence, were carried out in the penitentiary No. 7 Rusca. The activities were carried out for two years, when the women had healing experiences, accompanied by intense emotions. Together with the psychologists from the Institute for Social Initiatives and Family, they worked on topics such as abandonment, interpersonal conflicts, and difficulties in networking, states of fear, guilt, loneliness or anger. The plasticine sculptures, the drawing and the staging of some traumatic moments helped women to express pain and regrets, they mourned the sadness of the separations and of the words that could not be said in the past.

Overall, 141 women who suffered from physical, psychological or sexual abuse, or were victims of human trafficking received psychological assistance. Once they arrive in the peniten-

tiary, women struggle with guilt, they have suicidal thoughts or attempts, conflicts and difficulties in networking with other prisoners and the penitentiary employees, they lose confidence in themselves, and the relations with the original family are affected. These were also the topics of the art therapy sessions, reading club or individual counselling. The participants had a safe and assisted space in which they could explore their own thoughts, emotions, needs and identify new perspectives for everyday problems during and outside the detention. At the same time, the used techniques help the women connect to the internal resources of courage, will and motivation, they faced their own fears related to release, strengthened the relations with other prisoners by participating in joint activities, they made a commitment to their own wellbeing.

The program of psychological support was carried out by WLC in partnership with the Institute for Family and Social Initiatives and Sweden's support.



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The Women's Law Center has been named the most proactive NGO for outstanding actions in preventing and combating discrimination and promoting equality between women and men in public and private life. The award was given at the 2019 Equality Awards Gala. This distinction honors and motivates us to be equally dedicated to our cause further on. Thank you!

Women from the community, social workers and psychologists from Calarasi and Drochia districts participated in the public information session organized by WLC and the Novateca network of libraries on domestic violence in April. Women discussed with the specialists in

the field causes, reasons for the phenomenon, cycle of violence, types of violence and what should be done by any person subjected to the acts of abuse, in order to prevent and combat this phenomenon. The participants emphasized the crucial role of the community and the multidisciplinary response in cases of domestic violence.



We were glad that the participants were curious, told their own experience and condemned such behaviors. Meetings took place in partnership with the Novateca network of libraries and the support of Sweden and OAK Foundation.

A role play and two scenarios. A victim of domestic violence asks for help, one by one, from 12 persons, relatives, friends, specialists in the field. In one case she is rejected or discouraged, in another, everyone comes up with support and potential solutions. Thus, the nurses could see the vicious circle in which the victim would get, if she did not receive help at the right time. Furthermore, the participants in the training session discussed the stereotypes accompanying the phenomenon of domestic violence, the profile of the victim and the perpetrator, specific legal aspects and the response of the health system to such cases. The training was



held between 21 and 22 May, in which 50 nurses from the Forensic Medical Examination Center participated.

The workshops were conducted in partnership with the Medical Forensic Center, with the Sweden's support.

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- Hypothetical scenarios of cases of domestic violence and coordinated response strategies
- Effective cooperation between authorities and service providers
- Assessment and management of the risks in dynamics
- Effective application of protection measures
- Notification, stages and response measures on the spot
- Effective hearing of witnesses and victims
- How do we overcome negative stereotypes and prejudices?

These are just a few of the topics addressed in the trainings of 23-24 May and 27-28 May for police officers. Participants from over 15 districts of the country had the opportunity to analyze complicated situations that they encounter in the field, to discuss the best practices of their colleagues, including to update knowledge on the changes included in the police intervention instructions in cases of domestic violence.

The trainings were organized by WLC in collaboration with the General Police Inspectorate and were financially supported by Sweden and OAK Foundation.

Natalia Vilcu, Executive Director of the Women's Law Center, participated in the public consultations organized by the Commission for Human Rights and Inter-Ethnic Relations, during which she presented the WLC's activity in the field of domestic violence, outlined the progress achieved over the years and highlighted aspects that needed to be improved.

Natalia Vilcu stated that "the Republic of Moldova signed the Istanbul Convention in 2017. We have a framework that is relatively adjusted to this international treaty and we believe that the time has come for this Convention to be ratified. In this regard, in 2019 we conducted an analysis of the compatibility of the national legislation with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention in which we detected some mismatches. We are currently working on a draft law in which we come up with proposals for amending the legislation, and I would appreciate your support in speeding up the further adoption of these proposals."



THE HAND-MADE WORKSHOPS CREATE A SPACE FOR CREATION AND OPENNESS FOR WLC BENEFICIARIES



Lots of color, perseverance, maximum concentration and good results. This is how we can describe the latest handmade workshops for WLC beneficiaries and for a group from the Center for Assistance and Protection of Victims and Potential Victims of Human Trafficking.

Natalia Oleatovschi explained to the participants two new techniques for creating some unique works. Women and children learned a technique called Thread and Ink Painting. Embarrassed at the beginning, but extremely sociable at the end, the participants shared childhood experiences and beautiful memories of school and Arts and Crafts classes. At the end, their age, place of residence, life story didn't matter at all. Their eyes reflected the pleasure of creating something new, of helping each other and spending the time together. What seemed chaos at first, turned into a splendid sunset.

During another workshop, the women were captivated by the history of stained glass. One of the beneficiaries told us





that she was really enjoying these workshops. Besides the fact that they have a space to discuss their mundane issues, they also learn working techniques that they use at the kindergarten where they work. 'The children so happy when I propose them to craft something hand made. At this workshop I learn the technique, and subsequently I practice it with the children. It makes me feel good, including because I can offer something useful to the children.'

The workshops are held monthly and aim to develop certain hand-made skills. They also serve as a platform for discussions and mutual support for WLC beneficiaries. The financial support comes from Sweden and the Oak Foundation.



WLC ACTIVITY IN FIGURES

Between April and June 2019, WLC provided support to 164 beneficiaries, of whom 163 were women, and 69 were women with underage children. Most of them live in the urban area – 123, and 40 – in the rural area. WLC statistics show that women aged 25-44 (87 beneficiaries) and women aged 45-54 (23 beneficiaries) suffer most often from domestic violence. According to WLC's statistics, in 84.14% of cases it is a combined form of violence. Most of the time, this is physical and psychological violence – 119 cases or physical, psychological and sexual violence concurrently – 9 cases. With the assistance of WLC, victims of domestic violence availed of 28 Protection Orders. WLC provided legal support to victims in 5 criminal cases and 4 civil cases.



LEVEL OF EDUCATION:

- **128 victims** have secondary education (including incomplete secondary or specialised secondary)
- **31 victims** have higher education

OCCUPATIONAL STATUS:

- **73 women** are either unemployed or are on childcare leave
- **50 women** are employed
- **59 women** take care of minor children

VICTIM'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PERPETRATOR:

- **in 62 cases**, the victim was the (former) partner/wife
- **in 10 cases**, the victim was the parent – mother/father
- **in 7 cases**, the victim was the child – daughter/son

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

‘EVERY TIME I TELL ABOUT MY EXPERIENCE AS A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVOR, I FEEL LIKE I’M TAKING MY INDEPENDENCE BACK. THIS MEANS FREEDOM.’

Mark and Valerie Wynn have over 40 years of experience as professionals contributing to eliminating domestic violence. Building on their experience as police officers, they are now conducting trainings and disseminating the best practices in the field as consultants. They are comfortable to talk about the mistakes they made and the lessons learned from each experience. They organised workshops in over 60 countries, and for the first time in the Republic of Moldova. We invite you to find out what motivates them to continue at the same pace and why did they choose to dedicate many years to preventing and combating domestic violence.



Tell us a little about your experience so far. How would you describe your 40 years of experience?

V.W.: I studied psychology, after which I started working in the police, at the Domestic Violence Department. That shaped my worldview. At that time I met Mark, which was a significant change in my life. I began to notice that, including in my community, there was a lack of services



for the victims of domestic violence. There were many things that I thought I could change. That's how I decided to open my organisation. One of our principles was to offer help, regardless of the service requested. I rented an apartment complex and opened a transition program. Women and children victims of domestic violence can live there for up to two years, and our focus is to help them rebuild their lives. During the



past years, Mark and I have been organising trainings together. I have been to over 60 countries with such trainings.

M.W.: I also told the group that I was exposed for 10 years to domestic violence when I was a child. The stepfather used violence against all of our family members. I survived. I grew up and I chose to be a police officer. I spent 20 years in this field and another 20 years as a consultant at the United States Department of State. I have about 50 years experience of interacting with domestic violence as a crime.

Our victims are still ashamed when they do talk about their experiences. How did you overcome it?

M.W.: I think every time I tell about my experience as a survivor, I feel like I'm taking part of my independence back. I see myself as someone who is no longer controlled by his/her own past, I see myself as a free human being. I want to encourage the police officers attending this training, those who heard this story, to encourage people to do the same thing here, in Moldova. When more and more people talk about it, we'll be able to turn the curve against the abuser and protect the victim. I do not see myself as weak, on the contrary, I take the power in relation to my abuser and that means freedom.

V.W.: I am a survivor too. I was assaulted by one of my partners. I totally agree with what Wynn said, which is why I speak about my life during the trainings.

Why is the police role crucial in such cases?

V.W.: The police have the responsibility for reacting. A police officer can stop the violence, a lawyer cannot. The police can protect the victim and arrest the abuser. If a victim calls the police and does not receive the appropriate help, the likelihood is that she won't call them again.

M.W.: Moreover, the police took the oath that they would protect all citizens, including the victims of domestic violence. A police officer's words have power. What he/she tells or promises a victim, the latter would believe it. Every police officer is responsible for ensuring that the law helps him/her to honor his/her promise. If the law provides protection to the victims, it is the police officer's responsibility to enforce it. This is how it works all over the world.



Why is the Coordinated Community Response important?

V.W.: Domestic violence has an economic, physical, psychological, and social impact on a victim's life. If it affects all spheres of life, one cannot expect that only one part of the system comes with a solution. Everyone, i.e. the doctors, social workers, police officers, lawyers, has to join their efforts in order to help. We need a community that isolates the victim from the violence and helps her recover her life. It is also one of the methods of preventing the phenomenon. Once removed from an abusive environment, a child has fewer chances of becoming a victim or a perpetrator.

M.W.: The whole process begins with the moment when a woman decides to leave the abuser. And we tell the police officers that they are the guardians of this process. They will close the door, put an end to the violence. However, beyond the door, the responsibilities must be shared with the doctors, lawyers, social workers.

How long can it take until we see the change in the society?

V.W.: We are talking first and foremost about a change in culture and perception. The boys are still raised by instilling them the idea that they are privileged. I think it'd be useful to have more women in leadership positions. The more equity we have in all aspects of daily life, the closer we are to ending this phenomenon.

M.W.: We have to be patient. What we've seen over the last 50 years is a change in culture, where more and more men take responsibility for correcting the behaviour of other men. Things will look different in 2-3 generations. I don't think we will ever return from where we started in the past, where women were perceived as half citizens. It's important to make sure that each individual enjoys equity and freedom and that he/she is treated equally.

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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