



# MANUAL OF CHANGE

Collection of practices & processes  
for Women Support Services

**TRUST**



Co-funded by  
the European Union



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# INTRODUCTION

The TRUST - Towards Replicable forms of Support and Tools for Women's Specialist Services in crisis situations - is a 24-month transnational project funded under the CERV-2021-DAPHNE Program. The project seeks to develop a re-engineering methodology for the processes of Women Support Services and enhance the resilience and efficiency of these organizations, particularly during times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Women's Support Services faced unprecedented challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, as the crisis exacerbated existing gender inequalities and introduced new obstacles for women. One of the primary struggles was the surge in demand for services. The pandemic created an alarming increase in domestic violence and gender-based violence globally, placing an immense burden on support organizations. Women seeking assistance for issues related to violence, abuse, and trauma overwhelmed these organizations, stretching their resources to the limit.

Financial constraints posed a significant hurdle for women's support organizations. The redirection of funds to immediate health and economic concerns during lockdowns and economic downturns left these organizations grappling with resource shortages. The financial strain not only hampered their ability to maintain existing services but also hindered efforts to expand their reach to meet the escalating demand.

Lockdowns and quarantine measures presented logistical challenges in providing safe spaces for women experiencing violence. Movement restrictions and the need for social distancing made it difficult for women to access shelters, exacerbating the impact of increased violence in homes. Operating and maintaining shelters under these conditions became an additional challenge for organizations dedicated to providing these crucial safe-havens.

The shift to virtual communication during lockdowns introduced technology barriers. Women without access to technology or those not comfortable with online platforms faced difficulties reaching out to support organizations. This digital divide further marginalized vulnerable populations, limiting the ability of these organizations to connect with and assist those in need, especially as many support services moved to online platforms.

The economic fallout of the pandemic disproportionately affected women, particularly those in low-wage and informal sectors. This had cascading effects on the work of women's support organizations, necessitating an adjustment to address the intersectionality of issues related to economic empowerment and job security. Supporting women in the workforce became an integral aspect of these organizations' missions.

Staff burnout emerged as a critical challenge for women's support organizations combating violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. The surge in demand for services, coupled with the emotional toll of addressing trauma and violence, strained personnel. The shift to virtual platforms, personal responsibilities, and the intensity of the work contributed to exhaustion.

The pandemic's impact on mental health posed additional challenges. Support organizations had to adapt their services to address the heightened mental health needs of women. The stress, anxiety, and trauma exacerbated by the pandemic and lockdown measures required additional counselling and resources to help women cope.

Advocacy efforts to address gender-based violence and women's rights issues encountered setbacks. The pandemic shifted public and political attention to immediate health concerns, leading to the deprioritization of policy initiatives and legislative efforts related to women's rights. This hindered the progress that these organizations had been making in advocating for systemic change and legal protections.

Intersectionality issues became more pronounced as women from marginalized communities faced compounded challenges. Women's support organizations had to address the intersectionality of gender with race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and other factors to ensure that their services were inclusive and responsive to diverse needs. The pandemic underscored existing disparities and vulnerabilities faced by women in different social contexts.

Disruptions in community outreach posed another significant obstacle. Lockdowns and social distancing measures hindered efforts to conduct awareness campaigns and provide education in communities. This lack of outreach left women in various communities more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, as they may not have been aware of available resources and support.

Despite these challenges, women's support organizations demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability. Many organizations quickly pivoted to online platforms, offering virtual counseling and support services. Collaborations with other stakeholders, including governments and non-governmental organizations, became crucial in navigating the complex challenges presented by the pandemic. These organizations found innovative ways to continue providing essential services, demonstrating their commitment to supporting women in the face of unprecedented challenges.

The Manual of Change outlines the novel practices and processes introduced by the project partners in response to challenges arising during the pandemic and focuses on eight (8) main sectors.

- Self-care & Well-being
- Supervision
- Fundraising
- Case management in a crisis situation
- Digital Dimension of Violence
- Online chat services
- Advertisement of services
- Community Outreach

# SELF-CARE AND WELL-BEING

Prioritizing the self-care and well-being of professionals in Women's Support Services is vital. Dealing with sensitive issues, employees may face emotional strain and burnout. Ensuring their mental and physical health is crucial for maintaining professional effectiveness, reducing turnover, and fostering a positive organizational culture. A focus on staff well-being not only prevents burnout but also empowers organizations to better support women in need. By providing resources, training, and a supportive work environment, these organizations can sustain their mission, creating a lasting impact on the lives of women and promoting a culture of empathy and resilience.

As part of the TRUST project, the partner organisation SURT is showcasing in this chapter the development process of their Equity Plan as good practice during the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is essential to keep in mind that the pandemic had various impacts on feminist organizations and Women's Specialist Services. Like the majority of organizations and entities, SURT faced great difficulties: abrupt changes in the types of support provided to beneficiaries, instability, and economic insecurity, and an increasing precariousness of working conditions. As a result, there was an increase in the mental workload of professionals, leading to stress and generalized exhaustion among social sector workers, especially those specialized in direct intervention with beneficiaries. It became clear that it was necessary to establish new internal mechanisms and protocols to safeguard the well-being of all staff.

Although it is challenging to define care - because of the multiplicity of theories and understandings of this concept - the starting point for this document was that personal care and the well-being of all workers is an essential horizon for a feminist labor structure. The Gender Equity Plan aims to establish these foundations.

We highlight this experience as a good practice in terms of self-care and well-being since it is a document with the aim of avoiding care crises such as the one experienced with the pandemic and promoting a work practice consistent with the feminist ethics of care. For this purpose, we have segmented this process in two moments: 1) the phase of diagnosis and identification of the needs of the workers, 2) the elaboration and implementation of the Gender Equity Plan.

While the needs of each feminist organization and each WSS are different, we believe the tools we used for the organizational diagnosis and the stages that shaped the Gender Equity Plan may be replicable - or at least inspiring - for other organizations and entities.

## GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

The diagnostic phase of the Gender Equity Plan started in May 2020 and concluded in July 2021. The diagnostic phase was defined as the starting point of a participatory process, which provided spaces for joint reflection on the entity. In order to generate an exhaustive diagnosis to build practices based on the transversal incorporation of the ethics of care, four phases were defined:

1. Participatory diagnosis: The main objective was to gather expectations, perceptions, and concrete reflections on the internal ways of building equity. For this purpose, the Diagnosis Commission developed and implemented quantitative and qualitative methodological tools, which were validated by SURT's Board of Directors. The quantitative tool used during the diagnosis phase was an online anonymous survey addressed to all SURT workers. In regard to qualitative tools, we held participatory group reflection and analysis sessions to exchange ideas.

2. Documentary analysis: Existing internal documents were analyzed and classified as relevant to contribute to different areas of change for the organization. Among these are documents there were the entity's management policies; public statements; communication manuals; methodological guides; management procedures, and general reports.
3. Occupancy report: This document provides detailed quantitative data about the staff, including its distribution across different areas and fields of work. It also includes an analysis of the professional classification system, as well as an examination of working time, flexibility, co-responsibility, and non-sexist communication.
4. Results of the diagnosis: The results of the diagnosis were compiled in a final report that presents and summarizes the results and evaluative conclusions of the different areas of change. The Gender Equity Plan is developed by conducting a participatory diagnosis that identifies the entity's strengths, conflicts, and challenges and synthesizes them.

Thanks to the analysis and systematization of the information gathered in this process, specific needs related to care were identified.

## RESOURCES NEEDED

The team responsible to create the methodological tools for the diagnosis were the members of the Diagnostic Commission. The Board approved all the work prior to the implementation of these methodologies.

Among the resources used to develop the diagnostic phase, we highlight the information-gathering tools as an essential and effective resource. This is why we comment here in more detail on the specificities of the quantitative and qualitative methodologies employed.

As mentioned, the survey was the methodological tool used for quantitative data collection. So far, two surveys conducted: the first during the diagnostic phase and the second - which is currently being deployed - to evaluate the progress of the implementation of the Gender Equity Plan.

*Although the second survey is not part of the diagnostic process, it is mentioned to highlight the follow-up process of the Gender Equity Plan.*

The fourth area, focused on the organization of equal and efficient time from a caring approach, was divided into three parts in the questionnaire. The evaluation of the time management model, co-responsibility and flexibility measures, and the management of remote work were the axes on which this section of questions was based. Indeed, proper time management is essential for the well-being of workers both inside and outside the workplace.

In addition, questions were integrated into an annex dealing with sexual and workplace harassment at work. The purpose was to evaluate, on the one hand, the level of exposure to harassment perceived by the workers and, on the other hand, the level of knowledge of the existing tools in SURT in case of harassment situations.

Furthermore, for the participatory diagnosis, the results of this survey were complemented by the group sessions of reflection and analysis.

The purpose of these group sessions was to share the survey results and build a shared reflection on the highlighted strengths and weaknesses. The sessions were also structured according to the areas of change. Through a participatory methodology, where the participants were active agents in the construction of knowledge, the following organization of the sessions was carried out: dynamic identification of expectations, presentation of the results of the diagnosis, joint evaluation of the results, review of the difficulties and construction of proposals, and sharing of the group work.

The reflection groups allowed for sharing of relevant qualitative information about different conceptions of care and well-being and proposed initiatives to integrate the ethics of care in the organization. During the sessions, several concerns arose that translated into expectations regarding the Gender Equity Plan. One of the most relevant was the implementation of care for the Plan and the entity. In addition to explicitly mentioning the care issue, other closely related expectations emerged, such as getting to know colleagues better, improving everyone's participation in the work, and even improving working conditions - central to people's well-being.

As with the survey, the discussion groups were guided by the proposed change areas. Concrete proposals emerged from these discussions, including developing a protocol or care manual to enhance conflict resolution and problem-solving approaches. Consequently, one of the most significant aspects of the Equity Plan is the creation of this document.

## **INTENDED RESULTS**

The main goal of the data collection was to identify perceived strengths, weak points, challenges, and recommendations according to the SURT staff, to identify common themes that could inform the Gender Equity Plan. The results of the survey and working groups are detailed in two separate reports.

Although the recommendations and proposals were numerous and diverse, two fundamental issues stand out. On the one hand, the need to strengthen care within the organization, and on the other, the challenge of finding effective and inclusive communication mechanisms. The Gender Equity Plan itself includes actions to advance in these areas.

## **DIFFICULTIES & RISKS**

One of the difficulties encountered during the diagnostic process was reaching the total workforce. The survey sample was the total number of people in the entity, meaning 102 people with binding contracts. The online questionnaire was sent to all employees, but only 66 - i.e., 64%- opened the questionnaire and 50 - that is, 49% of the workforce- answered it.

Additionally, the discussion groups witnessed the active involvement of 51 individuals, showcasing a participation rate nearly identical to that of the survey.

To put it simply, involving all employees in this diagnostic process was a challenging task. While we believe that the numbers we obtained were significant enough, it's important to note that they may not be entirely representative.

# EQUITY COMMISSION

Based on the experiences and needs of SURT's female employees, the Gender Equity Plan was approved by the Board of Directors and the Foundation's Board in October 2021, presented and discussed with the entire organization, and finally validated by the Negotiating Committee in December 2021. Its implementation was planned between 2022 and 2025 (with a four-year term), so the total number of actions and measures still need to be implemented.

The Equity Commission was formed with the purpose of being a tool for the whole organization to ensure - in a global and transversal way - the progress of the entity towards an organization based on gender equity and to consolidate organizational models based on a feminist ethic. Thus, together with SURT's Board of Directors, the Equity Commission is in charge of implementing the Gender Equity Plan and communicating with the whole organization, besides being a central part of its drafting process.

The committee is composed of one person representing each area of work in SURT: Central Services, Economic Empowerment Area, Personal Empowerment Area, Consultancy Area, General Management, Union Representative, Human Resources.

The main objective of the entity's Gender Equity Plan is to move towards a model of organization and practice - both internal and external - based on feminist values of gender equity and the incorporation of the ethics of care. Specific objectives, indicators, and several actions were defined for each area of change. Based on this, an Action Plan was built, understood as a work plan, where the measures to achieve the objectives were integrated and systematized. This planning is composed of a specific objective and expected results; actions to be developed during the period of validity of the Plan (2022-2025); areas and persons responsible for the fulfilment of the objectives; a calendar indicating the period in which the development of the actions should begin. The Equity Commission is in charge of compliance.

## RESOURCES NEEDED

The financing of this project -its diagnostic phase and its drafting and implementation- was carried out through two public funds from the Barcelona City Council. The purpose of these funds was to contribute to the development of internal tools for the development of various social entities.

In terms of data collection tools, the resources utilized in the GenderEquality Plan project's second phase are identical to those utilized in the previous phase, which we have already introduced.

## INTENDED RESULTS

Through the drafting of a specific action plan, it is expected that all the objectives and actions proposed in the document will be achieved in an efficient and pertinent manner.

Two actions are identified as priorities in specific terms of care: SURT's internal lab or and sexual harassment protocol and a care guide with specific definitions and tools around the ethics of care.

Regarding the revision of SURT's lab or and sexual harassment plan, it is expected - and established within the Equity Plan - an update and implementation of the protocols. Thus, the fifth area of change is designed to meet this objective. In addition to the review, the aim is to achieve innovation and improvement for the prevention of harassment, as well as raise awareness at the entity level. To achieve this result, the participation of the head of the people management department, the prevention committee, and an external consultant was established.

Also, it is anticipated that the completion of the Care Guide, which is outlined in the Gender Equity Plan and stems from the ongoing construction process, will be achieved by 2025. In order to accomplish this objective, the equity plan includes a new survey at the organizational level that specifically addresses the topic of care.

Its primary goal is to gain a comprehensive understanding of our interpretation of care and how we believe it should be integrated into employees' daily routines. Furthermore, it should propose concrete examples and recommendations for implementing this vision. The outcome will be a comprehensive report containing actionable proposals that will ultimately contribute to the development of the Final Guide.

This already underway process is based on the Self-Diagnosis Guide for Organizations - Feminist Ethical and Care Perspective, developed by the network of Organizations for Global Justice. This Guide is organized into six axes that can be used independently or together: hegemonic values; conflicts, relationships, and emotions; participation and democracy; organization of work and tasks; conciliation and co-responsibility; sexual and gender-based harassment. Through these dimensions, the Self-Diagnosis Guide addresses the ethics of care in the work and lab or relations world from a feminist perspective.

## **DIFFICULTIES & RISKS**

As it is an extensive plan with multiple actions, one difficulty is giving it continuity and executing the actions within the foreseen timeframe. This task is mainly carried out by the Equity Commission, which, in order to overcome this difficulty, prioritizes some actions over others according to contextual needs, giving the plan a certain adaptability.

Another difficulty encountered is that of communication and the constant involvement of all parts of the entity in the process of implementing the Action Plan. The actions defined are for everyone working in SURT; however, it is difficult to get the information to all of them. The Committee is currently responsible for transferring all information to Surt's communication area to ensure a constant flow of information. This is important for the effective implementation of the plan and for overcoming any obstacles.

# REFLECTIONS

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the need to think and deploy an initiative that promotes equity from a feminist perspective of care becomes evident in Surt. From here, and in line with the review of the Equality Plan of the entity, it was decided to build a protocol that responds to this issue and establish the Gender Equity Plan.

This decision and the work undertaken can be considered a good practice to be highlighted. Indeed, the implementation of the Gender Equity Plan is a medium-term project that seeks to have a team of professionals better informed and trained in matters of personal care and well-being. Building work dynamics with these bases is key to the professional capacity to face a crisis.

All the processes, reflections, and measures taken to develop the Plan reflect the need for an internal care policy. However, certain specific actions respond more directly to these ambitions, such as the Care Guide and the Harassment Protocol. The first document is still in the drafting phase, for which surveys are being carried out to gather more specific information on the ideas surrounding care. Surt already has a Harassment Protocol, but it is also being revised to integrate the results obtained from the surveys, particularly the second one.

What we tried to establish here was a brief description of the processes of diagnosis and elaboration of the Gender Equity Plan to give ideas about possible strategies for dealing with a care crisis in the workplace.

# SUPERVISION

Supervision is an critical tool for achieving improved performance of women's support services after the pandemic. This is an accountable, two- way process that motivates workers and supports the development of good practice.

To supervise their clinical and theoretical work, psychologists have met in groups at least since the founding of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society (Counselman & Weber, 2004). Supervision is a form of an educational process that can occur in various fields or professions. Supervision represents professional education as a form of training. Supervisees attending supervision should have an opportunity to learn from experts in their professional area. However, in some cases they can also learn from experts in other fields (American Psychological Association, 2015).

Supervision gives workers a chance to: reflect on their practice focus on their strengths, to receive feedback, guidance and support, identify and review areas for personal development. The benefits are helping workers develop and build on their skills and knowledge and result in positive outcomes for those they provide care and support to, supports workers to feel safe in their practice, (especially when faced with complex and challenging situations). The managers and organisations can monitor and review workers' progress.

In order to be developed a positive relationship with the supervisee the supervisor needs to form an effective relationship with mutual respect for each other, by valuing each other's input and ideas. The guiding values are trust, openness and honesty and thus the supervisee will be supported to develop a positive relationship with people, children and families in their own practice. To support the supervisee's continuing professional

development the supervision will need to involve some teaching and mentoring. The supervisees should be comfortable discussing all aspects of their work with the supervisor and the principle of confidentiality should be respected. Both of them should be able to access the supervision record at any time.

## GROUP SUPERVISION

When choosing a supervision model, therapists need to match their professional development plan with the model's goals, theoretical orientation, member roles and relationship (leader-led/leader-less), the degree of structure in the procedure, members' roles and feedback focus, and stages in group development. There are two types of group supervision: vertical and horizontal. Vertical supervision is a hierarchical relationship, with the supervisor as an identified expert in the process and includes tutorial supervision, training supervision, managerial and consultancy supervision. Horizontal supervision is a non-hierarchical relationship, commonly referred to as peer supervision, and supervision is at the same level in the form of consultancy. Peer supervision differs from more traditional forms of supervision in that it does not require the presence of a more qualified, identified expert in the process; the supervisor, and in that the peer supervision process emphasizes developmental, critical and supportive feedback and encourages self-directed learning, while deemphasizes evaluation.

The group supervision experience can help establish very specific professional repertoires that can only be accomplished in a group setting, such as actively listening to others, refraining from engaging in competing activities and contributing in a way that keeps the group moving along in a positive and productive manner. The benefits of the group setting are plentiful, alongside the skills required.

Through group supervision, either led or peer, and independently of the supervision model applied for specific reasons, professionals, trainees, supervisors, participants can achieve:

ongoing professional development; - greater (social) networking; - observational learning; - having multiple listeners for the same event; - decreased dependency on authority; - increased reflectivity and options from different frameworks; - reducing limitations of work, autonomy and conflict resolution when needed; - developing empathy; - peer feedback; - coping with isolation of private practice gaining and providing support, encouragement and practical ideas; - modelling and rehearsing positive and productive discussion; - practicing public speaking and presenting; - developing professional repertoires- meeting individual goals relating to difficult cases, ethical and professional issues; - feeling safe to present, gained community, collegiality, validation and belonging.

The term 'reflective practice' was coined by Schön in 1983, emphasizing "knowing in action" and since then it was employed in a wider meaning. Dewey (1933) first described reflection in terms of 'thinking about thinking', encouraging professionals to examine the underlying reasons for their choices and actions, as Reflective Practice is a reciprocal process in which experience is the trigger for reflection and a mindful practice for practitioners.

Reflective practice was born as a process in which practitioners gain skills to identify, and change various assumptions to increase awareness, effectiveness, and competency. It constitutes a form of experiential learning which enables professionals to move from their own concrete experiences, to abstract conceptualization of an idea to act upon the new idea and to step to further experience. The practice can provide a common training setting in which reflective practice skills can be taught and developed. Early thoughts involve description while deeper levels of reflection involve greater examination of premises and critical synthesis.

Reflective practice is effectively learned:

- within a small group setting.
- through narrative methods
- with structured supervision that promotes safety and trust
- in a guided and mentored experience
- in a 'learning-by-doing' structured approach in which reflecting can not

motivate learning and facilitate the assimilation of experience with knowledge and skills.

- critical awareness is achieved by reflecting about what has been done during an intervention (reflection-in-action), by starting analysis after the fact (reflection-on action) and by planning for future interventions (reflection for-action)

Reflective practice is an iterative process, in which experience is the trigger for reflection. Surface reflection involves description, while deeper levels of reflection involve greater examination of premises and critical synthesis. The capacity for reflective practice is a domain of competency requirements for workers across healthcare domains. Reflective Practice can take the following three formats:

1. Reflective supervision group refers to the phenomenon in which an unconscious dynamic from the therapeutic context is ‘enacted’ in the group and is called “parallel process”. The group, including the supervisor, is mirroring the unconscious dynamics highlighted by the supervisee’s presentation. In this case, the supervisor helps group members to use their experience in the supervision group to reach insight into the therapeutic relationship.
2. Reflective counselling practice is a mindful practice for practitioners. In this case, awareness of own strengths or/and limitations, levels of stress and mindfulness of personal matters is fundamental because personal matters can affect performance. After each counselling session, the professional evaluates her/his performance. As learning strategy, it allows professionals to become aware of their theoretical base and learn from their experience. Reflective counselling practice with practitioners, or staff in hospitals, is a method to enhance awareness of own strengths or/and limitations. Levels of stress and mindfulness of personal matters constitute key-points as personal matters can affect performance.
3. Practicum involves primarily experiential learning (learning-by-doing) in which trainees or professionals reflect on their experiences to continually learn and reapply their learning to a new experience.

But supervision is not only about learning...

It is also about support.

It is useful prevention of burnout.

It is a kind of responsibility that professionals should have for their beneficiaries.

## REFLECTIONS

Supervision stands as a cornerstone in the realm of women's support services, offering a multifaceted approach to sustaining both the emotional well-being of staff and the effectiveness of the assistance provided to women in distress. The emotionally charged nature of the work, often involving cases of trauma and abuse, necessitates a supportive structure. Regular supervision sessions provide a dedicated space for staff to discuss challenging cases, share experiences, and seek guidance. This not only prevents burnout and compassion fatigue but also cultivates a sense of professional development and growth.

Furthermore, supervision plays a pivotal role in skill enhancement and knowledge dissemination. It serves as a platform for ongoing training, ensuring that staff members stay abreast of best practices and emerging trends in the field. This continuous learning process enhances the quality-of-service delivery and equips staff with the tools needed to address the evolving needs of the women they support.

In essence, supervision is an investment in the resilience and empowerment of the workforce. A well-supervised team is better equipped to navigate the complexities of women's support services, ultimately providing more sustainable and impactful assistance to those in need. By prioritizing supervision, these organizations fortify their advocacy initiatives, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and ensuring that their mission endures with strength and compassion.

# FUNDRAISING

Fundraising is the set of activities that non-profit organizations put in place to increase and develop and increase their available funds and /or resources for the pursuit of their mission and activities. There are many types of fundraising that are very different from each other, involving many different methods and practices. Donors can be diverse and include the private sector (companies), foundations, and international organizations.

For women specialist services, the fundraising activity cannot simply be considered as the activity to "raise funds", but to cultivate, grow and develop resources necessary for the realization of the organization's mission, promoting and strengthening its social and political identity in the community of reference and towards a multiplicity of stakeholders.

In this chapter the partner organisation RelAzione Positive is outlining two impactful practices that have been implemented during COVID-19 to support the fundraising of their organisation.

## ONLINE SOLIDARITY MARKET

Before COVID-19, one of the fundraising strategies implemented by the Anti-violence center (AVC) of Padua was the participation to local "solidarity markets". Such events took place in the context of local festivals dedicated to no-profit organizations, events organized by other organizing or public administrations, and during awareness-raising events. On those occasions, the AVC could distribute, in exchange of a donation, handcrafted products (handbags, bracelets, earrings, scrunches, shoppers) produced by women participating in Laboratories organized by the AVC as well as personalized gadgets (t-shirts, sweat-shirt, cups, notebooks, magnets, stickers).

Due to the limitations imposed by Covid19, and therefore the lack of opportunities to take part in public events such as those mentioned above, an important source of funds on which the AVC could rely on to implement its mission suddenly disappeared. There was therefore the need to figure out ways to continue such activity through alternative channels.

Drawing inspiration from existing marketplaces online, the “online solidarity market” was created and still exists today. It mainly consists in a dedicated webpage where a catalog of available products is published. For each product, there is a picture, a description and the minimum donation requested. Simply and accessible instructions were provided for making orders (by phone, email or social media), forms of payment accepted (via bank transfer or cash), collection of products (a specific day-hours perweek) and/or delivery of products via mail (the only available modalities during the Covid19 limitations). All steps had been managed by the AVC staff, without the support of specific or professionals’ software or programmes. A communication strategy was developed to support the “online solidarity market”, with special attention to relevant period such as Christmas time, 8th March, 25 November. At present, the “online solidarity market” runs in parallel and integrates solidarity markets carried out in presence.

## RESOURCES NEEDED

The resources needed to implement the “online solidarity market” included time, human resources and technology cost:

- Physical setting (box or table), tools and skills to make photographs of products (mobile, camera, ringlight);
- Software and skills for photo-editing (example photoshop);
- Software or programmes for the creation of catalogue (example in-designing or alternative for free “canva”);
- Human resources for website and social media management;
- Human resources for management of orders, payments, collection/delivery;
- Human resources for communication plan and activities;
- Availability of funds to invest in advance in the creation of products or purchase of gadgets;

- Adequate space to store products (fabric, buttons, cords) and gadgets;
- Creativity in proposing new products and gadgets.

## INTENDED RESULTS

The “online solidarity market” is a practice that mainly aimed at addressing the contingent need to secure a traditional source of fundraising in a time of crisis and physical limitations such as Covid19. Beyond the expectations, such practice has proved the potential for sustainability, replicability, scalability and cost/effectiveness.

## DIFFICULTIES & RISKS

The “unsophisticated” system of collecting orders and managing collection, delivery, and payments of products implies some risks and difficulties, including:

- Possible mistakes in management of orders of products, especially for unique pieces;
- Catalogue of available products not always updated.

Further difficulties and risks may include:

- The investment made in advance in the creation of products or purchase of gadgets is not covered by donations;
- Space limitations to store products;
- Limited human resources to take care of it;
- Competition with many other non-profit organizations.

## ENGAGEMENT THROUGH SPORTS EVENTS

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, a new category of stakeholders for the development of fundraising activities has been consolidated: sports organizations and sports event managers. Fundraising initiatives with such actors often offer a variety of fundraising activities/tools, so that the cooperation is much more similar to a fully-fledged partnership.

During COVID-19, sports events were organized online as “virtual challenges”

with the possibility for participants to contribute to the mission of non-profit organizations. At present, where all sports events are organized in presence, the most involved sport is running and/or trekking, with the most important event of the Padova Marathon. Volleyball, rugby or football events may occasionally be involved. Such sports events could be created with a specific solidarity purpose (example: Pink Run) or could provide for support to the antiviolence centre as a collateral solidarity mission (Padova Marathon).

In detail, the fundraising activities/tools in the context of sports events may include:

- production and selling of personalized T-shirt and race bibs;
- dedicated stand in departure/arrival area for the distribution of gadgets;
- involvement of high-profile runners/players;
- individual fundraising initiatives promoted by race competitors;
- involvement of companies and other interested stakeholders through
- sponsorship requests (for example, with a minimum donation, the logo of the company could be added in the t-shirt);
- present the participation to the competition as a “team building” activity to companies.

A good practice is to link each sport event to a specific project to be supported, instead of linking it to generic support to the antiviolence centre. A specific communication strategy has therefore to be developed.

A positive indirect effect is that the participation in such events represents a team building activity for the staff of the antiviolence centre as well. The participation of the staff as a “team” is a sign of engagement that is visible and appreciated by other participants and supporters.

## RESOURCES NEEDED

The resources needed to implement the fundraising activity included time, human resources and technology cost:

- Human resources for management of contacts with sport events managers, registrations of participants, distribution of t-shirts, bibs, gadgets;
- Human resources for communication plan and activities;

- Availability of funds to invest in advance to purchase t-shirts and bibs;
- Antiviolence centre staff involvement and participation;
- Human resources for website and social media management;
- Involvement of volunteers.

## INTENDED RESULTS

“Sporting Fundraising” is a practice aimed at addressing the contingent need to secure funds during COVID-19 as, thanks to the “virtual challenges” mode, it was possible to involve race participants in solidarity activities. Once returned back in presence, sporting fundraising, especially with running/trekking events, has proven to be a very cost-effective fundraising strategy.

## DIFFICULTIES & RISKS

Difficulties and risks may include:

- Bad weather conditions may deeply impact the participation to sport events such as races;
- The investment made in advance for the purchase of t-shirt and bibs is not covered by donations;
- Scarce involvement of volunteers due to the fact that sport events are planned during weekend or holidays;
- Limited human resources to take care of it;
- Competition with many other non-profit organizations.

## REFLECTION

While the two practices presented above were developed in the context of the Covid19 crisis with the primary aim to address the contingent need to secure funds in a time of crisis and physical limitations, beyond the expectations, they both proved the potential for sustainability, replicability, scalability and cost/effectiveness.

At present, the “online solidarity market” runs in parallel and integrates solidarity markets carried out in presence. The online version allowed the antiviolence centre to widen the reach of its solidarity market and expand the network of donors and supporters. For what concerns the practice “Sporting Fundraising”, despite the investment (especially in terms of human resources), the return in terms of support and visibility is fairly good.

# CASE MANAGEMENT IN CRISIS SITUATION

The casework with situations of domestic violence is challenging for the staff. Having to deal with violence for many hours of the day, trying to find creative solutions and facing distressed and despaired victims is a difficult job. The fear of failing and the concern with the victim's health and wellbeing is permanent and staff is susceptible to burnout. Having the personal and professional competences to deal with this type of stress and to manage the cases successfully is a fundamental for the staff that works in these conditions.

The COVID-19 expectably increased the difficulties of dealing with domestic violence. COVID-19 imposed new challenges to the victims of domestic but also to the staff working in this field.

For a victim of domestic violence, the pandemic situation represented new living conditions that in many situations embodied an intensified risk of assault (Bullinger, Carr, & Packham, 2020; Kaukinen, 2020). With the mandatory lockdown the victims that lived together with the perpetrator felt they were trapped at home; those that were trying to leave the common dueling might have delayed that decision and those that were already facing the separation and living apart might have felt an exacerbated isolation due to lockdown and reduction of social life. New forms of violence were introduced during the COVID-19, such as the threat of the self-contamination of the virus; or the intimidation of not handling the children due to possible exposition of the victims to the virus concerning their professional experience (e.g., working in health care sector or in supermarkets customer service). Other forms of violence, such as online violence, were potentially intensified. Despite facing violence at home, the general rule during COVID-19 was a 'stay-at-home' order.

Some victims might not have been aware that this order was not applicable to them. Other victims might have (altruistically) felt the violent situation was not serious enough to disclose and ask for help during a pandemic situation when many people were facing serious health problems and some even dying. Those that were already implicated in support with specialized services met the challenge of continuing this support online and have the necessary technical expertise to do so (Erskine, 2020). Victims of gender-based violence in general also faced isolation in a more intensive way concerning the COVID-19 restrictive measures.

For the staff working in specialized women's support services (WSS), the COVID-19 was also a challenge (Pfitzner et al., 2020; Pontedeira, 2020). The personal working with violence had to quickly learn and discover how to work remotely, but at the same time how to ensure face-to-face services if needed in a health and secure environment. Working remotely often meant working from home, a place that for these people was their safe place to rest and stay away of the violent and heavy situations they find at work. The operationalization of remote work for these members of staff was difficult not only in finding and acquire the technology necessary, but also in terms of finding a place in their houses where they could keep the confidentiality of their work and protect their own family members. The staff of WSS were also, obviously, concerned about their own health and their family and afraid of the consequences of the pandemic situation for their personal lives (Pfitzner et al., 2020; Pontedeira, 2020).

For all these reasons, case management in crisis situations, especially when dealing with domestic violence, became even challenging. A "Task Force against violence" can help improving the case management. A Task force is a term to define a team or a unit established to work on a single identified task or activity. The term was originally used to describe military action-teams. Nowadays many non-military organizations create this type of temporary specialized team to perform ad hoc activities.

Task force against violence, and specifically against domestic violence have been created by different type of organizations to develop specific policies or products. For example, the United Nations have created the Inter-agency

Task Force on Violence Against Women to enhance support to national level efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women by the entities of the United Nations system. This task force include important members to be articulated such as World Health Organization (WHO), World Bank, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and others.

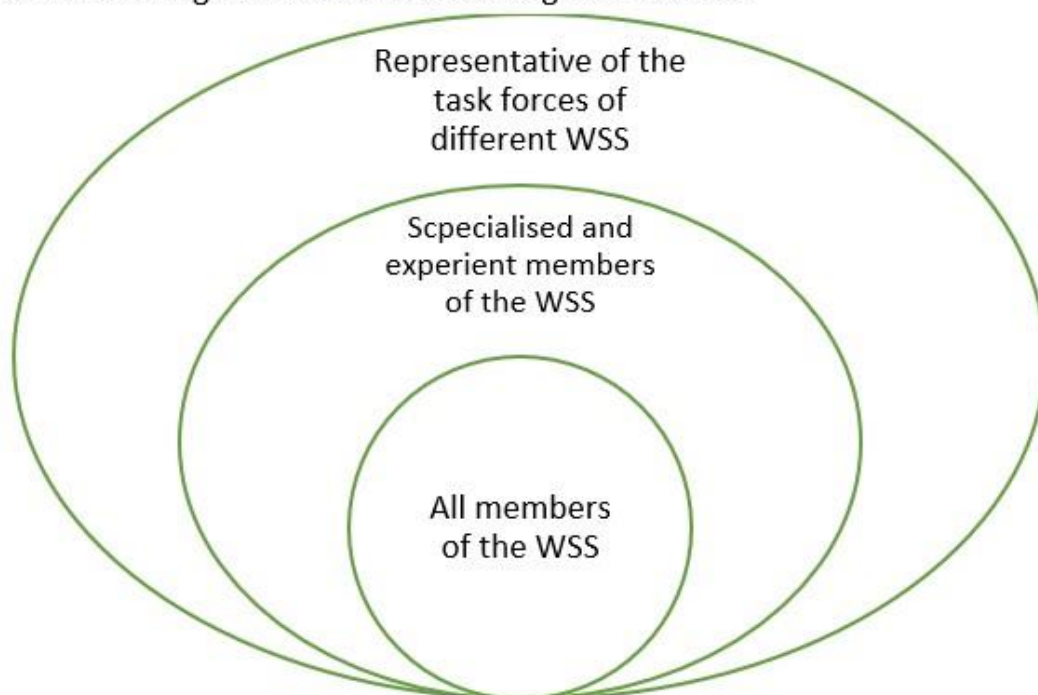
In Europe, the Council of Europe Task Force to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence (EG-TFV) was set in 2005 defining eight international experts in the field of preventing and combating violence against women. As result of this task force, a report was published in 2008 defining key priorities and in August 2014 the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) come into force.

## TASK FORCE AGAINST VIOLENCE

Establishing a Task Force against violence during a crisis situation is crucial to adequately respond to unique moments that are characterized by having unexpected struggles.

The Task Force against violence should be formed by specialized teams with a specific purpose (or purposes). The task force within WSS might have different configurations (Figure 1). One the one side the task force can be constituted by all members of a specific WSS so that all can actively participate. On the other side the task force can be constituted by a few more experience staff members or staff more on the specific subject in discussion. Finally, it could also be important to create an inter-institutional task force with a representative of each institution that provides support to women for discussions that might be relevant for several institutions. In any of the configurations it is very important that all members of the staff are aware of the main reflections of these meetings.

**Figure 1.** Different configurations of task force against violence



The objectives of creating a Task Force against violence might vary according to the needs of each institution; according to the context in which it is established and more importantly, according to the crisis situation that emerges.

The COVID-19 crisis generated several unprecedented difficulties that needed an immediate and urgent response from the specialized services that provide support to women. Figure 2 names some examples of specific challenges WSS faced due to the pandemic. To start, for example, support centers had to deal with a mandatory lockdown instruction and decide whether or not to continue providing face-to-face services. In some countries there was no mandatory rule and therefore it was up to the decision of each service. Most services initiated the remote provision of support without any time for training and sometimes with precarious technical conditions. The contingency plans to ensure health was also often difficult to implement in the context of provision of services (e.g. physical distance at room for support).

In shelters, general contingency plans were also proved ineffective. Some countries have implemented special measures to accommodation services.

but often these measures were directed to general accommodation services (e.g., nursing homes) and were not adequate to victims of domestic violence. For example, having the test as mandatory before entering in an accommodation services such as a shelter during moments that was an outbreak of these tests was a difficulty. The decision of having a mandatory isolation at entry in the shelter for 15 days to ensure the person was not contaminated also proved inadequate to victims of domestic violence. The food rationing imposed generally in the supermarkets also lead to some difficulties for those members of the staff that usually buy a greater quantity of items for shelters. The national mandatory confinement also closed hostels and hotels and imposed a restriction of mobility that inhibit people from traveling. This was also a limitation to those women who were starting their automatization process and were leaving the shelter. The fact women had to stay a longer period and the increased need of shelters lead to a decrease in the number of vacancies at the beginning of the pandemic.

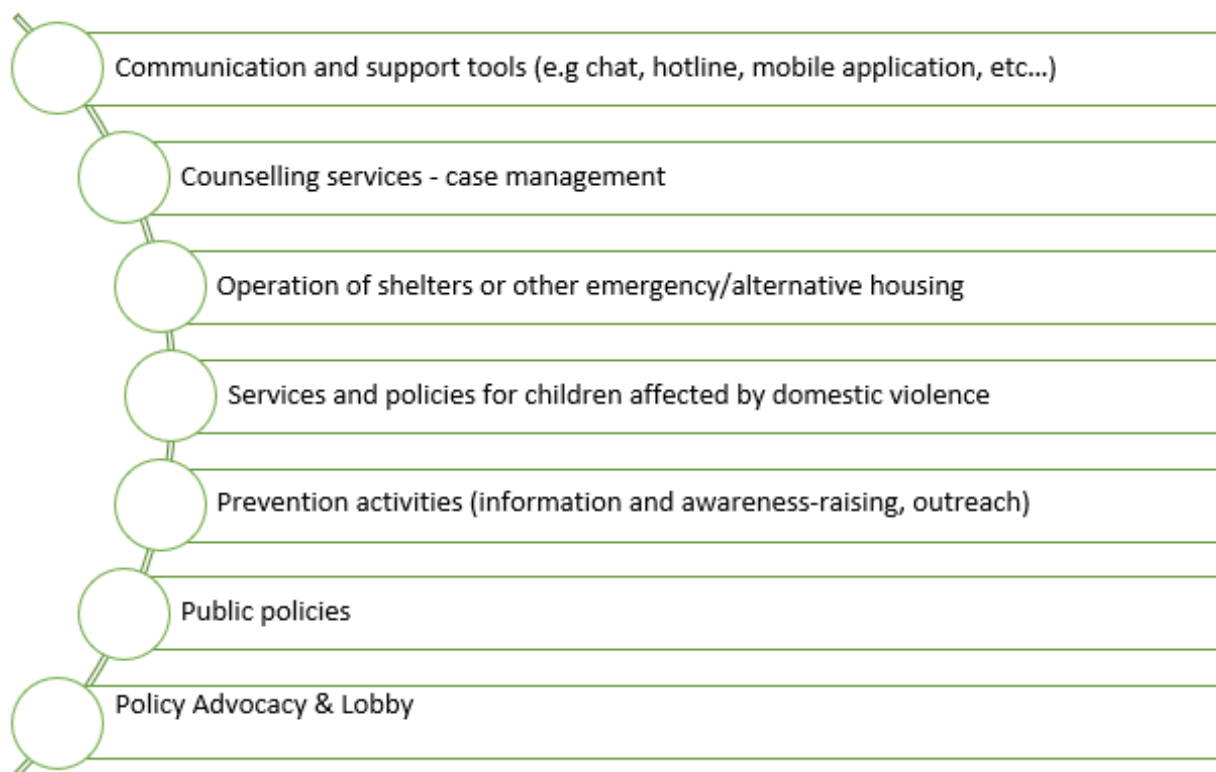
The court services are some locations closed even for domestic violence cases which created a significant delay in providing justice and a problem in keeping the victims safe. In cases that the services continued, it was also a challenge due to the health restrictions imposed, for example, face masks, that diminished the capacity of communication of people. The child custody was also messy at the beginning of the pandemic with several aggressors threatening the victims they would not deliver their children to them due to lockdowns and health restrictions. In some places, cases related with child custody were paused in the court services.

**Figure 2.** Examples of the specific challenges faced by the specialized services during the COVID-19

Support centers	Shelters and other accommodation services	Court services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face-to-face services</li> <li>• Providing support remotely</li> <li>• Contingency plans to ensure health</li> <li>• Risk case management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contingency plans to ensure health</li> <li>• Testing as mandatory</li> <li>• 15 days isolation as mandatory</li> <li>• Food rationing in supermarkets</li> <li>• Vacancies in shelters vs fears of contamination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic violence cases</li> <li>• Restriction orders</li> <li>• Child custody</li> </ul>

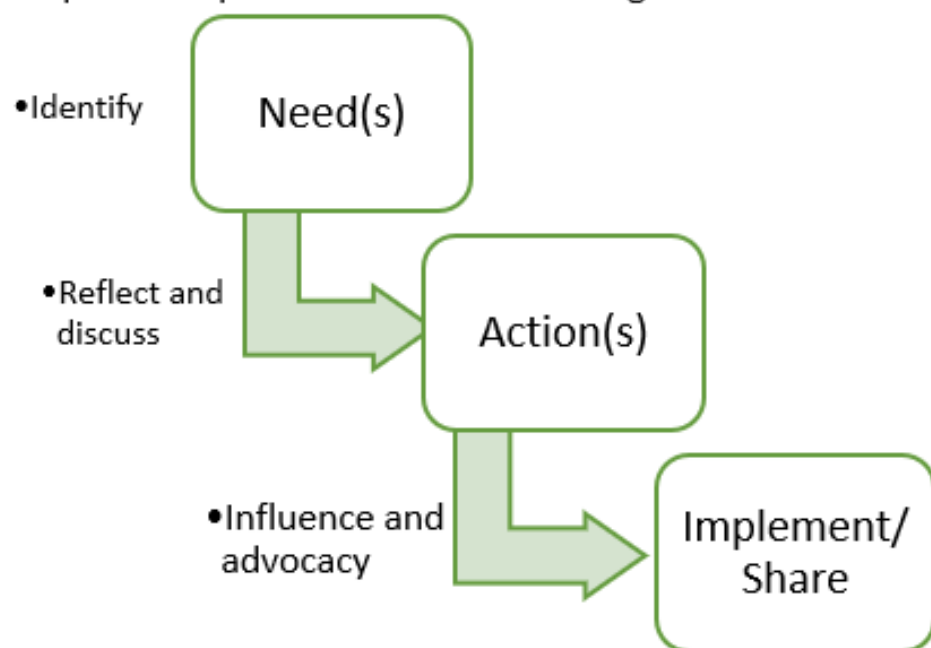
Facing these new challenges the dimensions or categories in which a task force could be established were numerous (Figure 3). A task force could be created to create or assess a new communication tool (such as chat; or a hotline). Concerning the new dynamics of domestic violence and remote service provision, task force can also be important to provide supervision and manage cases. In the case management it would be important to gather together several locations of services (e.g., staff from different support services) so that practices and cases can be discussed. At this task force, the most challenging cases could be shared so that different solutions are discussed and professionals' responsibilities are shared. The same type of task force can be created to discuss the needs of shelters in terms of operations and identify partners that could help improve the services (e.g., Supermarkets that deliver the food directly to the shelter). The discussion of public policies and advocacy is also very important during these crisis periods. The government and lawmakers might not be aware of the specific needs of domestic violence victims and therefore general health measures imposed to victims of domestic violence might be re-victimizing. The services can provide crucial information to help improve the response to victims during crisis.

**Figure 3.** Dimensions/categories of possible task forces



In Figure 4 it is described how a task force against violence could operate to achieve the intended results. The first step would be to identify the most urgent need or needs to tackle by this specialized team. The task force should have been formed by the staff that are relevant to these specific needs (e.g., if need the urgency is related to shelters it is very important to include members of the staff operating in shelters). Once the demands are identified the task force would be responsible to think about possible solutions and actions that could take place to improve the quality of the services or to solve a specific problem. These actions should be discussed with other members of the WSS so that all staff is involved and aligned in the decision-making. The final stage of the task force is to implement the measure(s) or share the recommendations. If possible, the task force should aim for advocacy because it is likely that in a crisis situation other services are facing the same difficulties. Sharing with other WSS or provide advocacy to members of the government on an emergency situation could be relevant to improve the national support system.

**Figure 4.** Step-by-step of the operation of a Task force against violence



## RESOURCES NEEDED

In terms of resources needed to implement a Task force against violence, the most important is specialized human resources. The more multidisciplinary the team and the more services are represented in the team the more likely the discussions are productive. It is also very important to identify relevant stakeholders (e.g., Members of ministry and government) and that these people are willing to meet the task force and discuss the proposals.

## INTENDED RESULTS

The overall result of a Task force against violence, regardless on the actions imposed, is to improve the service provided to the victims and the prevention of violence. During a pandemic situation such as COVID-19, the purpose should be to manage and operationalize the health needs (and subsequent restrictions imposed) with the domestic violence victim's needs. Generally, the objectives of the task force can be related to:

- Discuss data on any observed changes in domestic violence reporting;
- Go into the unique challenges posed to survivors and organizations during COVID-19;
- Go into the unique challenges posed to survivors and organizations during COVID-19;
- Identify and prioritise actions to strengthen the action of the institution;
- Design strategies to address gender-based violence during crisis;
- Supervision of the teams concerning case management;
- Create institutional contingency plan;
- Share information about policies within the institution;
- Identify policy, legislative and service gaps in WSS during crisis;
- Make recommendations on new legislation, policies or action plans on how services and support can be improved;
- Advocacy and/or provide advice on emerging issues to governments or other institutions.

## DIFFICULTIES & RISKS

There might be some difficulties on the operation of a task force. The first difficulty is related with the rejection of the proposed measures by the government or the relevant stakeholders. In these cases it is very important that the task force insists in participating in the discussion of the decision of the measure that will take place in these services so that the response created is suitable for the service.

Other risks are related with the availability for the meetings of the relevant staff members that were already with case overwork. To overcome this obstacle it could be suggested that the periodic meetings are scheduled in advance. Another risk is that an emergency situation happen in between of the meetings. In this case two or three of those more experienced members (in each field) could be identified and a quick call or meeting to discuss the emergency can be set.

## REFLECTION

A coordinated task force of committed stakeholders forms an unyielding alliance against gender-based violence. Together, law enforcement, healthcare professionals, social workers, and advocacy groups create a powerful front, seamlessly integrating their expertise. This collaborative synergy not only ensures a swift, empathetic response to incidents but also signifies a shared dedication to eradicating gender-based violence. By working collectively, we stand stronger in supporting survivors, prosecuting perpetrators, and advocating for lasting societal change. This united front is not just a response; it's a resounding statement that condemns gender-based violence and underscores our unwavering commitment to a world free from harm, fear, and inequality.

# DIGITAL DIMENSIONS OF VIOLENCE

Digital forms of gender-based violence against women should be contextualized in the broader framework of the phenomenon of violence against women. While the use of technology changes the dynamics, the space, and the circumstances of violence, it should be regarded as a continuity of the different forms of such violence that affects and exacerbates women and girls' experiences of gender-based violence against women. In fact, online and offline violence are not mutually exclusive, and oftentimes overlap. Unfortunately, technology-facilitated gender-based violence is often understood to be less harmful than physical violence and may be taken less seriously and receive less attention. It is therefore important to approach this phenomenon not as an isolated issue, but rather holistically and coherently with other forms of violence against women at the theoretical level, as well as at the policy level and operational level.

Digital forms of gender-based violence against women can include any act of violence against women and girls that is committed, assisted or aggravated in part or in full using information and communication technologies (ICTs). Such ICTs may include mobile phones and smartphones, the internet, social media platforms or email, geolocation tracking devices, drones and non-internet connected recording devices, and artificial intelligence (AI). Some of the most common uses of technology with the intention to cause harm to women can include intimidation, harassment, exploitation, abuse, stalking, threats and blackmail, all which can happen in an online space, or thanks to a technological device that sets the conditions for the abuse.

Digital forms of gender-based violence against women are not a recent phenomenon; it is, however, one that has been growing and increasing in recent years globally. This trend is a result of several intersecting factors, including the fact that women are increasingly gaining access to technology, online platforms, and shared spaces online, as well as the fact that women are increasingly using such spaces for public purposes such as work-related practices, self-advertisement, freelancing, advocacy, or online activism. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 amplified the phenomenon of digital violence, leading to significant increases in internet usage due to a shift from in-person to online interaction and a reliance on technology (50- 70%), further increasing women's vulnerability to online abuse.

While women's access to technology and participation in online spaces is a positive trend that should be encouraged with a broader aim of achieving gender equality, this can only be achieved by ensuring the safety of online public spaces for all women. The more women gain online public presence, the higher the risk of experiencing digital forms of violence and abuse, if no action is taken to prevent and/or mitigate associated risks.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF DIGITAL VIOLENCE

The different forms of digital violence that can take place are as numerous and varied as offline gender-based violence against women. Perpetrators can be part of survivors' everyday life - such as partners or ex-partners - as well as complete strangers. For example, a survey carried out in Brazil in 2018 revealed that the majority of offenders were current or former partners. Furthermore, potential victims can belong to any demographic, episodes of violence can be recurring or isolated, and take place in very different contexts. However, digital violence has certain specificities distinct from offline abuse, in that it can be perpetrated from anywhere and by anyone in total anonymity, making it potentially more difficult to identify perpetrators. It can also be perpetrated repeatedly and systematically, posing a constant threat, and can even involve multiple perpetrators. It can also be perpetrated in public spaces escalating associated harm, as it is often difficult to remove harmful content online.

Four categories of violence using ICTs can be identified:

1. forms of harassment, violence and abuse that are facilitated by the use of a specific technology or technological device (an example being intimate partner violence carried out by the use of spyware or other devices with the aim of tracking one's position);
2. abuse that takes place or is amplified online (for example, forms of image-based sexual abuse such as the non-consensual sharing of intimate images);
3. cases where technology has generated a new form of abuse (such as deepfake pornography and abuse of our digital selves in the metaverse);
4. and cases where the technological environment is used to enable forms of violence and abuse to take place.

Among these (sometimes intersecting) categories, some more specific definitions of different forms of abuse can be provided. For example, online sexual harassment (according to the definition of sexual harassment set in the Istanbul Convention), can encompass a range of specific forms of it, such as:

- non-consensual image or video-sharing (non-consensual sharing of nude or sexual images of a person or threats thereof include acts of image-based sexual abuse);
- non-consensual taking, producing or procuring of intimate images or videos (such as acts of “upskirting” and taking “creepshots” as well as producing digitally altered imagery in which a person's face or body is superimposed or “stitched into” a pornographic photo or video, known as “fake pornography”, such as “deepfakes”, when synthetic images are created using artificial intelligence);
- exploitation, coercion, and threats (such as s forced sexting, sexual extortion, rape threats, sexualised/gendered doxing, impersonation and outing sexualised bullying);
- cyberflashing (sending unsolicited sexual images via dating or messaging applications, texts, or using Airdrop or Bluetooth technologies).

Other forms of such violence include online and technology-facilitated stalking, such as:

- talking practices committed in the digital sphere including threats (of a sexual, economic, physical or psychological nature);
- damage to reputation;
- monitoring and gathering of private information on the victim,
- identity theft;
- solicitation for sex;
- impersonating the victim;
- harassing with the help of accomplices to isolate the victim.

These practices usually involve the tactic of surveillance of the victim's social media or messaging platforms, e-mails and phone, password theft or cracking or hacking their devices to access their private spaces via the installation of spyware or geo-localisation apps, or via stealing their devices. Perpetrators can also take on the identity of the other person or monitor the victim via technology devices connected through the Internet of Things (IoT), such as smart home appliances.

Lastly, the digital dimensions of psychological violence encompass a series of behaviours such as:

- Domestic violence using digital means such as the possession of victim's intimate images, and use of technology to track the whereabouts of the victim;
- Individual acts of violence that are not criminalised may reach the threshold of psychological violence when combined with the mob mentality and repetition facilitated by the internet: a joke or teasing comment may escalate to cyberbullying when made repeatedly or by a large number of people;
- Intimidation, threats, insults, shame, and defamation (often with an overlap on hate speech);
- Economic abuse (control of one's bank account or surveillance of spending through online banking).

It is worth mentioning that in some cases technology can be used by intermediaries that can have a role in setting up the conditions for the perpetration of digital violence (an example being the advertisement of illicit, illegal or harmful services online).

## INCIDENCE AND IMPACT OF DIGITAL VIOLENCE

According to estimations, almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of women have experienced some form of digital violence. However, existing estimations and data may not reveal the true dimensions of the phenomenon, as many cases go unreported due to personal factors (embarrassment, fear of retaliation, economic dependency) as well as societal (imbalanced power relations for men and women in society, privacy of the family, victim-blaming attitudes). Furthermore, many women may not be aware of digital violence being perpetrated against them (for example, unaware that their intimate images are being shared online). As mentioned above, all women may be at risk of violence in the digital sphere. There are, however, some groups of women at a heightened risk, such as women in public life: for example, in politics, journalism, activism and advocacy, particularly those actively involved in politics, in the promotion of gender equality and human rights, and in climate justice. Women experiencing multiple and/or intersecting discrimination and oppression are also at heightened risk and disproportionately impacted, as digital forms of violence can be exacerbated by factors such as disability, sexual orientation, political affiliation, religion, social origin, migration status or celebrity status, among others. It is important, therefore, to adopt an intersectional approach to digital violence to ensure appropriate legal and policy responses and enable access to protection and assistance. Young girls may also be at a heightened risk of digital forms of violence, including online grooming and catfishing, due to a higher rate of use of technology and social media platforms from a young age, and the largely unregulated online environment and without appropriate digital education and adult support.

Digital violence can have a devastating mental and physical impact on women and girls. Consequences can include psychological and mental harm, including chronic stress, paranoia, depression and anxiety, public shame, a sense of guilt and self-blame, and a feeling of loss of control. Such psychological impacts may lead to self-harm or suicide. It may also have an impact on financial well-being and independence through loss of employment, abstaining from online participation, damaged credit rating, inability to control or loss of economic resources, among others.

## MEASURES FOR INTEGRATION OF DIGITAL VIOLENCE IN DIRECT SUPPORT SERVICES

As previously stated, digital violence is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon and is rooted in structural inequalities and discrimination against women.

Women's specialist services (WSSs) play a prominent role in addressing cases of digital violence and provide specialised support to women and girls affected. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, WSSs had to adapt their model of support to incorporate these elements of online violence interlinked to coercive control and other characteristics of domestic violence.

Within the framework of providing direct support to victims/survivors of digital violence in the context of violence against women and girls, the following measures can be implemented:

### Provision of information

WSS can set up specific channels of information for women and girls on the manifestations of digital violence, available services for reporting, as well as available support and assistance. Most women are not aware of digital violence and its manifestations and impact, who to report to and how to access support. This information must be comprehensive, culturally appropriate, safely available, comprehensive and accessible.

### Examples and resources for provision of information on digital violence:

- The Australian Government's E-safety Commissioner [website](#) provides information about different forms of online abuse targeting women, frequently asked questions, available civil redress mechanisms, links to relevant research, advice on how to remove content, including images and video, how to report to social media or websites, and how to get help from police and information for family and friends. It also has a portal for reporting and obtaining assistance from e-Safety for cyberbullying, IBSA and child sexual abuse material.

- Cyber Civil Rights Without My Consent<sup>11</sup> initiative provides information about online harassment, including a guide called Something Can be Done.
- YWCA Canada has developed information packages about IBSA<sup>12</sup> for adolescent girls and young women to explain legal rights, how to report IBSA and where to get support.

*Source: GBV AoR Helpdesk, Learning Series on technology-facilitated gender-based violence, Learning Brief #2*

### Creating reporting mechanisms

WSS can set up reporting mechanisms to ensure women can report digital violence and access support safely and anonymously. Furthermore, the role of such resources can have an even deeper impact in contexts where there are no effective legislative or institutional responses to digital violence are in place, therefore WSS and similar services being the only support to survivors. Examples: digital hotline support, apps.

### Examples an resources for reporting mechanisms and hotlines for digital violence:

- Pakistan's Digital Rights Foundation Cyber Harassment Helpline provides free and confidential legal advice, digital security support, psychological counselling and a referral system to victims of online harassment.
- The UK Revenge Porn Helpline provides phone, email and web-based service for survivors, and professionals supporting them. The helpline provides non-judgmental and confidential advice, help reporting and removal of content, social media advice, reporting to the police, legal advice.
- INHOPE (International Association of Internet Hotlines) is a network of associations focused on responding to criminally illegal content and activity, in particular child sexual abuse material, online grooming and online hate including xenophobia.

## Integrating digital violence in case management

Integrating responses to digital violence into existing case management processes and practices is an important step that WSS can take to ensure a comprehensive management of the phenomenon integrating its different aspects in safety planning and risk management. In this regard, steps can be taken in the following ways:

- Risk should be managed at all levels, not only close to escalation. Assess and manage also low and medium risk, also due to the continuous nature of domestic violence, which can coexist or interact with digital forms of it.
- Risk assessment should be intended as a part of a broader multi agency mechanism, oriented at protecting victims from the threat of additional violence while issuing protection orders. In this regard, it can be useful to produce individualized safety plans.
- When a case is being managed, professionals should not only consider the single incident of digital violence, but more holistically take into account the whole picture of the abuse.
- Lists of type of evidence to be gathered for prosecution purposes should be contained in protocols but also warnings should be made in this regard: if the circumstances do not allow to collect evidence safely, it should not be done.
- Include in case-management lists of warning signs for digital violence.

## Examples and resources for integrating digital violence into case management:

WESNET has a number of resources to support frontline GBV workers provide information and support survivors in relation to digital violence.

These include:

- [Is Tech Abuse Happening to You?](#)
- [Technology Safety Plan](#)
- [Documentation Tips for Survivors of Technology Abuse and Stalking](#)
- [Assessing for Technology Abuse and Privacy](#)
- [Dealing with harassing calls, texts, and messages](#)
- [10 Easy Steps to Maximise Privacy](#)
- [Stalking and Technology-Facilitated Abuse Log](#)

Safe Ireland has produced a booklet to help support workers and networks to identify warning signs for digital violence and modes of online abuse by perpetrators.

### **Providing assistance to remove abusive content and protect against further abuse**

Many survivors simply want the abuse to stop and want the abusive content and images removed. WSS can provide information and assistance to enable survivors to reduce their vulnerability to further violence, and can support survivors to remove abusive content and images. Approaches to assisting survivors to remove content, improve their safety and prevent further abuse include:

- Providing survivors with technical advice and guidance on how to increase their digital safety, security and privacy, including assisting them to remove applications and software used for monitoring and surveillance, delete browsing history, change privacy and location settings, and managing passwords.
- Helping survivors use reporting mechanisms provided by online platforms to request the company take down abusive content. Social media platforms commonly have take-down policies and mechanisms for reporting inappropriate content and requesting its removal. While these policies can be effective, they are not always easy to navigate and unless an image or other content violates community standards, it can be difficult to get it removed.
- Establishing a direct communication channel with social media platforms at a regional or country level and requesting content be removed on a survivor's behalf. Some social media platforms require the person affected to request content be removed, in which case, services provide guidance on how to do this.
- Engaging an online content removal expert to delete unwanted or abusive content. There are individuals and companies that remove online content on a fee-for-service basis and while this is not generally affordable to survivors, it is a cost that some support services include in their budgets.

Wherever available, IT experts can obtain technical equipment, and build digital infrastructure as necessary, also with the aim of helping survivors with content removal when needed, since it is a task that can be complex and necessitate specific technological expertise. As an alternative, there are individuals and companies that remove online content on a fee-for-service basis and while this is not generally affordable to survivors, it is a cost that some support services include in their budgets. If no expert can be hired, training should be given to WSS workers to help with content removal.

### Examples and resources to help survivors remove content and protect against further abuse:

- TacticalTech's [Data Detox Kit](#) is a toolkit for promoting digital safety.
- TechSafety's [Safety Toolkit](#) provides guidance and links to tools to improve women and girls' digital safety, security and privacy, available in English and Spanish.
- Cyber Civil Rights has an online [content removal guide](#) and can also refer survivors to a free service to help secure the removal of private images, videos and other content.
- TakeBacktheTech provides information and guidance for survivors to protect against [online stalking](#), [online extortion](#), and [hate speech](#).
- [Chayn's Online Safety Guide](#) was written to support survivors of intimate partner violence and stalking, though is also applicable to other forms of online GBV.
- Cornell Tech runs a [Computer Security Clinic](#) for survivors of intimate partner violence where trained volunteers work individually with clients to improve their safety and reduce technology-related abuses. They also offer a range of [how-to- guides](#) to support survivors experiencing technology-related abuse.
- Cyber Rights website has [detailed advice](#) on a large number of social media platform's policies and reporting mechanisms for IBSA.

- ♦ The Esafety guide of the Government of Australia provides specific insight on platforms and social media, underlying reporting mechanisms for each of them.

### Providing psychological assistance and relief

As previously shown, digital violence can have severe consequences on someone's mental health and requires specific support for its impact. What WSS can be done in this regard:

- Train staff of WSSs on non-judgmental attitudes and behaviours to reduce victim blaming, as well as equipping frontline staff with knowledge, attitudes and skills to validate and address the fear, sense of helplessness and other impacts that survivors of digital violence experience.
- Enhance frontline staff's skills in detecting risk factors for associated risks (self-harm, honour-related harm).
- Offer psychological counselling as tailored as possible to the experiences of digital abuse and develop a referral system for victims of online harassment to local networks of professional counsellors with experience in support through digital violence.
- Providing an anonymous and safe online forum for survivors to engage with others with similar experiences to share experiences and coping strategies may be helpful for some survivors. Any virtual peer support service needs to be carefully managed and moderated by someone trained to manage group dynamics and provide appropriate support, including intervention if a member expresses self-harming or suicidal ideation. It is also vital that there is a high level of security on such services to protect survivor's confidentiality and safety.

### Examples and resources for support for survivors:

- ♦ YWCA Canada has developed a package for those supporting girls experiencing digital violence, including parents, teachers, service providers, police and ICT professionals, with practical tips for providing compassionate and non-judgmental support.
- ♦ HeartMob is a site where those facing online harassment can get support from others who have similar experiences.

- TechSafety offers information on managing online support groups for survivors.
- Bloom is a free, web-based support group for domestic abuse survivors and anyone experiencing GBV. Run by Chayn volunteers, it aims to recreate the trust, engagement, and confidentiality of a physical group setting online. Each group offers daily tips, tricks, tools, and comforting words. With courses ranging between 4 weeks to 2 months, survivors learn, reflect, complete homework, and process what they've experienced in a safe and invested space. Bloom's content and methods are validated by trauma therapists and leading experts in the field.
- Maru Chatbot aims to support and empower people who are experiencing, witnessing or fighting online harassment by providing advice and resources from experts and activists. Users can learn more about online harassment, how to protect themselves from it, report and respond to it, or sup port others going through it.

### Prevention strategies

Beyond direct support for survivors of digital violence, WSSs can also carry out preventive and awareness-raising measures that contribute to long-term change at a policy and societal level. These include:

- Preventive action such as gender equality programmes as well as digital literacy initiatives (GREVIO 2021; IACHR 2019);
- Advocacy for the adoption of laws that criminalize the phenomenon in an effort to combat the culture of impunity related to it;
- Advocacy to hold privately owned internet platforms accountable for enabling forms of digital and online violence;
- Training front-line professionals that come in contact with survivors of digital violence to ensure a better understanding of the phenomenon, the intersectional needs of victims, and to prevent secondary victimisation or re-traumatisation such as police or judiciary Professionals and promote multi-agency coordination;
- Raising awareness and promoting public dialogue both online and offline, and developing and disseminating information for specific target groups (young people, parents and teachers)
- Collecting and analysing sex-disaggregated data and publishing reports.

## Examples and resources to help survivors remove content and protect against further abuse:

- The Internet Society is building awareness about online abuse in Barbados through the C.A.R.E - Combating (online) Abuse through Research and Education project, which includes an awareness campaign about the effects of online abuse on women and girls, and community dialogue on the issue. In Palestine, the same organization is undertaking awareness sessions with secondary school children.
- PeaceWomen Across the Globe and Palestinian NGO Women and Media Development are implementing a joint project To be safe which is seeking to build capacity of teachers and social workers in Palestinian schools to support survivors of online GBV and build students skills in protecting their digital privacy and security. The project also includes a plan for students to implement initiatives to further raise awareness among their peers.
- Webwise Ireland's online educational resources on IBSA include free teaching resources for schools and for adolescents, including a campaign video, facts about sexting and what to do if an image is shared without permission. It also includes resources for parents.
- The Cybersafe Toolkit is for teachers or other professionals working with young people, who want to address online violence against women and girls, including online sexual harassment and online safety, in the classroom or other settings. The toolkit provides materials to facilitate four workshops on the topics of non- consensual sharing of sexual images, exploitation, coercion and threats, sexualized bullying, and unwanted sexualization, including an online tool that encourages discussion and role play and a guide with practical information for facilitators.
- YWCA Canada has developed a package for those supporting girls experiencing digital violence, including parents, teachers, service providers, police and ICT professionals, with practical tips for providing compassionate and non-judgmental support.

# ONLINE DELIVERY OF SERVICES

The Covid-19 pandemic and the national lockdowns that were imposed, created the need for new services that could be delivered online. The Live chat service can be included in the a-synchronous forms of communication that use modern technologies in order to provide guidance and counselling (Castelnuovo, Gaggioli, Mantovani, & Riva, 2003-6). The Covid-19 pandemic increased the difficulty of victims to communicate with SPAVO/APHVF through the national helpline since they were forced to stay in with their abuser. The support and guidance a person can take from the Live chat service is consistent with society's growing trend for online search of information and services, increasing participation in counselling, enhancing feelings of safety, motivating the individual to share information; while there seems to show improved outcomes in some populations, including those experiencing trauma and especially abuse (Newman, Szkodny, Llera, & Przeworski, 2011; Richards & Ritsarntson, 2012-6).

First of all, it is a rather safe form of communication if the connection is private since the conversation is confidential with trained mental health professionals. Secondly, the victim's conversation request gets processed immediately and the need for guidance, support, counselling and empowerment is met in real time. Last but not least, the service is easily accessible even from a mobile phone with internet access. Based on the abovementioned, the Live Chat service gave the opportunity to victims to type instead of talk, to share their problems in a way that helped them stay safe, away from the abuser awareness.

The Live Chat service soon became a necessity for SPAVO/APHVF due to its numerous advantages, as many researchers have pointed out in the past (Cook και Doyle, 2002; Mallen et.al., 2003; Rochlen Land & Wong, 2004)

The Live chat service bridges geographical distances between the organization and the victim's place of residence and zeroes in on socio - demographic characteristics. It also facilitates the help channel for victims with disabilities e.g. hearing, vision or speech difficulties or disabilities. In addition, it enables children and teenagers to receive advice as they feel more familiar with digital media. The Live chat service, gives access to victims that in any different way would be in danger if tried to communicate through telephone call and covers the need for immediate intervention in critical moments. In general, this online service enhances access to help services and facilitates the sharing of more information due to distance and anonymity. It also helps victims that find it difficult to express themselves through talking and mobilizes individuals to gain access to support services.

The theoretical frame through which we work with victims of violence focuses on the feminist approach that conceptualizes violence as a result of the patriarchal structure of society through which men feel that like they have the right to control and power over women. In the feminist approach the emphasis is given on the empowerment of women through an equal and collaborative therapeutic relationship. The process of empowerment focuses on enhancing self-esteem, strengthening personal beliefs and daily functioning, enhancing self-care and learning new coping skills to problem solving. The main goal of this intervention is for the victim to finally act against the violence, capable to face the situation and empowered to move on (Brown, 1994; Enns, 2004).

## LIVE CHAT SERVICES

This section will include SPAVO/APHVF's suggested intervention model through the Live Chat service. In APHVF/SPAVO the Live Chat service can be accessed through our webpage (<https://domviolence.org.cy/en/>). The service is reachable in a 24hour basis, from Monday to Sunday as any other of the organisation's services. When anyone visits the webpage it pops up the chat option, with an automated message thanking the visitor for communicating and informing about personal data regulation and confidentiality breach.

SPAVO/APHVF's Live chat software was chosen in order to ensure and protect the communication. More specifically, each operator has a unique username and password and has access only to his/her communication transcripts. Whereas, only the platform administrator has access to all the communications that are made. In order to ensure the safety of the visitor, the communication chat automatically turns off after a few minutes of inactivity. In addition, when the visitor leaves the platform, all the data regarding the communication do not appear in the his socio-demographic profile of the browser.

### **Live chat intervention model**

The Live Chat intervention model that we SPAVO/APHVF's implements is based on a five stage model (Sindahl, 2013) supplemented with empirical data. The basic idea behind the concept of stages is that the victims move through the stages in a way to figure out possible solutions to their problems. The operator needs to keep in mind that for the victims of abuse is very difficult to find the strength and courage to speak up openly about what is happening behind closed doors. Sometimes the Live Chat service is the only way for a victim to receive information, guidance and possibly referrals to the competent authorities and support services.

The first stage is based on the need to establish a feeling of trust so that the victims could open up about what is troubling them. The operator at this stage tries to help the victims tell their story with the use of basic counselling techniques e.g. paraphrase and staying honest about the next steps the operator is going to take (e.g. Is it ok if I ask you some questions in order to better understand what is happening?). It has been found empirically that if the operator explains and discuss with the victim what is going to happen next it makes it easier for them to share more information.

In the second stage, the operator has in mind that he/she has to understand and assess the victim's situation/problem. The operator asks a few questions to identify and clarify the unclear conversation points. At this stage, the operator needs to identify what is important for the victim and what are the victim's resources to deal with the problem. Then and after the goals of this stage have been met, the operator thinks of what could be

helpful for the victim and starts to make a preliminary goal-oriented plan with them.

At the fourth stage, the operator in order to protect the victim with the frustration of the goal setting, informs the victim of different options to help with their case, in a non-threatening manner. In any case, the operator informs the victim of all referral options appropriate for them in a way that takes account any safety issues.

The last stage of the intervention model deals with the closure of online communication, which is important to be delimited by the professional. The operator tries to achieve a smooth closure since it is very important for the victim to leave the conversation with the feeling that someone understands and supports them, has developed initial cooperation with the organisation, and has been empowered enough to act against violence.

### **Important points for the Live Chat operators**

The Live Chat operators are strongly advised to consider any intersectionality issues; to examine the possible impact their interventions might have in different socio - educational and cultural individual characteristics. In addition, they have to keep in mind how any intersectionality issues, such as any disabilities and the age of the victim, may affect the quality and context of the conversation. Also keep in mind that online services are easily accessible by from minors that try to conceal their age. Operators need to be cautious to inform the victim of any action they are going to take, e.g. referrals to competent authorities, in order to get the victim's consent, and when to breach confidentiality. What has been found to be very helpful empirically, is for the operator to ask one question at a time and answer honestly to every victim's questions especially in case of confidentiality breaches. Every operator needs to be cautious about technical difficulties and inform the victim about alternative communication ways with the organisation. Last but not least, is important that all operators participate in supervision sessions.

## Crisis management in Live Chat service

There are a lot of victims that use the Live Chat service as an emergency contact as it is being staffed operated 24/7. SPAVO/APHVF's staff has been trained to act in case of emergency, for example if an abusive episode is happening at that specific time taking place and the victim cannot call the police. If a victim is in danger they could send messages like "I'm in danger", "I need help", "He's going to kill me" in order to get help in anyway she can. If an operator receives messages like the above, she/he has to ask specific questions in order to assess the danger and act accordingly. The operator should ask "A 'are you with the abuser right now?", "A 'are you injured?", "Do you need immediate police intervention or ambulance?".

If the victim does not respond to the operator's questions or closes the conversation, the operator communicates with the police and try to help assist in finding the victim's location in order to send help. The operator works together collaborates with the police by giving, providing all the information he/she might have for on the victim, since there is clearly immediate danger.

In any case of possible danger, the victim is encouraged to communicate with the police and is given contact information. The operator can also call to inform the police if the victim asks to do so. If an abusive episode is happening during the conversation, the operator has the right to inform the authorities immediately so help could be provided to the victim.

## RESOURCES NEEDED

The Live Chat service needs to be designed in a way that respects the confidentiality and privacy protection standards and the quality of the provided services. In order to plan and establish a Live Chat service an organization first of all needs a software well protected from possible security threats. It also needs to have a contingency plan in case of staff's misbehaviour or unauthorized intervention by third parties. For SPAVO/APHVF a good protection practice has been that every staff member has their own username and password so that they have access only to their communication transcript.

## INTENDED RESULTS

The main idea behind the launch of the Live Chat service was to facilitate victims' access to help services. Through the Live Chat service, SPAVO/APHVF intended to bring easier access to information about the rights, possibilities and options as needed by the victims. In addition, this online service intended to offer support and counselling, ease the cooperation with other relevant services; provide referrals to other relevant public services through written reports to the authorities. Last but not least, it operated like a gateway to other services of the organisation such as shelters, counselling service, Woman's House, Proteas, social service etc. During Covid-19 pandemic and local lockdowns, the Live Chat service also, acted as an alternative emergency call for help in cases that victims were unable to leave the house but needed immediate help.

## DIFFICULTIES & RISKS

Research in the field of a - synchronous counselling and communication interventions (Fenichel et al., 2002; Grohol, 1999, 2001-6; Barak et al., 2009-6) has shown that there are many challenges and difficulties. Operators of the Live Chat service face difficulties that derive from the lack of verbal and non-verbal communication signs in the process. In addition, the operators need to be trained in providing guidance, consultation and emergency help online. To solve these difficulties, there has to be a sophisticated software that ensures easy usage and online communication, private life protection, the prevention of security breaches. Furthermore, to address the danger of possible false understanding of the presented problem SPAVO/APHVF tries to provide operators with guidelines to help prevent the possible misunderstanding of the presented problem. Last but not least, another difficulty obstacle has to do with connection difficulties and help requests from victims that reside in different countries which means different legal framework, different domestic helplines and victims' support services. The Live Chat operators should take precaution measures to minimize the danger of contact loss or other technical difficulties and to inform victims of alternative ways to communicate (eg. phone number, e-mail) to be available if there are any problems. This should happen from the beginning of the online conversation if the operator is aware of problems like these.

# REFLECTION

How to improve the service?

In order to advance the live chat service, the organisation should consider user-friendly options that can be installed or considered, as well as data protection options etc.

A number of options are listed below (indicatively):

- It has been noted that operators are able to see what the person writes before the person send their message. To this end for personal data protection purposes, the operator informs the person before the start of the conversation that everything that is written can be seen by the operator before they are sent.
- Install a choice for font size, screen colour or background for people with visual impairments: this will provide a user-friendly interface for them.
- Availability to make a video call via Live Chat service: this will be useful as an option for people who cannot type.
- Standardized responses in case there is a delay in answering the call on Live Chat, e.g. "We apologise for the delay. An operator will respond within 2 minutes" or "We apologise for the delay. If you wish you can write down your contact information and an operator will contact you shortly."
- Standardised introductory questions before an operator answers Live Chat to gather initial information, e.g. "What is the subject of your enquiry?" or, "Are you in danger at the moment? If yes...(actions the person can take, e.g. leave a message with your tracking information and we will contact the competent authorities).."
- As there are deaf people who only know sign language and not the national language of the country, it is impossible for them to know how they can contact the live chat service. To this end the creation of material in sign language that is posted on webpages and social media of the organization mentioning how they can contact the organization via live chat, will be of much importance.
- A short evaluation questionnaire could be offered after the end of the conversation on live chat, assessing the quality of the conversation and the usefulness of the service. The questionnaire should be anonymous

and short in order collect only basic quality assurance evaluation responses, which will enable the organization to improve the live chat service and ensure its quality assurance.

- It is useful one or twice a month the operators/counsellors to receive legal advice from legal professionals to update relevant legal issues or clarify legal matters that are being set in conversations, so that they can give correct legal information to individuals.
- Live chats can be challenging for the counsellors since the face-to-face or voice interaction is missing. Supervision could be offered to operators/counsellors wither as part of their overall supervision process at work, or specifically for live chat cases, considering the amount of live chats.

# ADVERTISEMENT OF SERVICES

Women's Support Organisation aim to offer quality services to women survivors of violence. It can be argued that it is of equal importance that the provision of quality services is of equal importance to the potential beneficiaries being aware of them. In a different case the hard work of the professional is not capitalised to the extent that would be possible.

An effective communication plan plays a key role in putting your organisation out there. In particular, developing a communication plan for an organization is a multifaceted process that requires careful consideration of objectives, stakeholders, channels, content, feedback mechanisms, schedules, roles, crisis management, training, and ongoing evaluation.

Creating a successful communication plan for a women's support organization is essential to effectively convey its mission, engage with the community, and foster support. The process involves several key steps to ensure that the organization's messages resonate with the target audience and achieve the desired impact.

Firstly, it's crucial to define clear communication objectives. These objectives could include raising awareness about the organization's mission, promoting upcoming events, or providing resources for women in need. Having well-defined objectives will guide the rest of the communication plan and help measure its success.

Identifying the target audience is the next critical step. Understanding who the organization is trying to reach will inform the tone, content, and channels used for communication. The audience may include women in need

potential donors, volunteers, or the broader public. Tailoring messages to address the specific needs and interests of the target audience is essential for effective communication.

Crafting key messages is another vital aspect of the communication plan. These messages should succinctly convey the organization's mission, values, and the impact it has on the lives of women. Clarity and simplicity are key, ensuring that the messages are easy to understand and resonate with the audience.

Selecting the right communication channels is equally important. Utilizing social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn can help reach a diverse audience. Maintaining an informative and user-friendly website is crucial for providing in-depth information about the organization's work and services. Email newsletters can keep supporters updated on events and initiatives. Press releases can be issued to share important news with local media. Actively participating in community events provides an opportunity to connect with the audience directly.

Creating a content calendar helps plan communication efforts in advance. This ensures a consistent and strategic approach to messaging. Visuals, such as photos, infographics, and videos, can enhance the effectiveness of communication by making messages more engaging and shareable.

Engaging with the community is a fundamental aspect of a successful communication plan. Responding to comments, messages, and feedback on social media platforms fosters a sense of community and connection. Actively engaging with the audience helps build trust and loyalty.

Collaborating with other organizations, influencers, or community leaders who share similar goals can broaden the organization's reach. Partnerships can amplify the impact of communication efforts and create a more significant positive influence.

Establishing metrics for monitoring and evaluation is essential for assessing the success of the communication plan. Metrics could include website traffic,

social media engagement, event attendance, and other relevant indicators. Regularly reviewing the effectiveness of communication efforts allows for adjustments and improvements over time.

Developing a crisis communication plan is a proactive measure to handle potential crises or negative situations. Being prepared to respond promptly and effectively in challenging circumstances helps maintain the organization's reputation and credibility.

When the intended goal is the advertisement of services of Women's Support Organisations, the Union of Women Association has designed and utilized two different practices adjusted to the local context and needs of the beneficiaries

## EMERGENCY WIPES

The emergency wipes should be discreet and contain on it only the necessary information for a potential beneficiary to reach these services.

They are distributed to healthcare institutions and professionals for them to be offered to potential survivors of violence. The medical personnel is at the same time informed of how to recognize an incident of violence and how to inform them in a safe and friendly way of the resources available.

In particular, the medical personnel should make sure that the potential survivor of violence is being separated from the potential abuser who may have accompanied her to the doctor's appointment or emergency room.

Additionally, she is verbally informed of the available services eg. counselling, housing provision and the emergency phone line and is offered



two or three of the emergency wipes for her to keep in her purse and be able to call the emergency number in case of a future incident or simply to ask for more information.

## **RESOURCES NEEDED**

Implementing this practice requires a comprehensive allocation of resources. Firstly, financial resources are essential for the production of hygiene wipes, including materials, manufacturing, and packaging costs. Design and printing services are needed to create a discreet and informative design for the wipes, emphasizing the helpline number.

Educational materials, such as brochures detailing support services and resources, necessitate additional funding. Collaborating with medical facilities demands resources for meetings, training sessions, and communication materials to educate healthcare professionals about the initiative. Distribution logistics, including transportation and storage, require dedicated resources for seamless delivery to medical facilities.

Helpline operations need sufficient staffing and technology resources to handle potential increases in calls, ensuring victims receive timely and compassionate support. Legal and ethical compliance efforts, including consultations with legal professionals and the development of privacy policies, are crucial to protect individuals seeking help.

Lastly, follow-up support services require dedicated resources, including personnel trained in trauma-informed care, to provide ongoing assistance to those reaching out through the helpline. Strategic resource allocation across these areas is fundamental to the successful implementation of this service, allowing the organization to effectively reach and support victims of violence.

## **INTENDED RESULTS**

This initiative provides a crucial link for those in need. By placing the helpline number on the wipes, victims are offered a discreet and immediate resource during their vulnerable moments, facilitating a pathway to support.

The accompanying informative sessions play a pivotal role in raising awareness about available services, breaking down stigmas associated with seeking help, and actively engaging the community in the fight against violence.

Collaboration with medical professionals enhances the initiative's effectiveness, as healthcare providers become advocates for victims, guiding them towards the support they require. The discreet distribution of these wipes ensures that victims are not only physically cared for but also emotionally supported during their interactions with medical facilities. The success of this initiative is not solely measured by increased helpline usage but also by its positive public relations impact, showcasing the organization's commitment to community welfare.

Continuous evaluation through feedback mechanisms and follow-up support underscores the commitment to refining and enhancing the service based on real-world effectiveness. Beyond immediate impact, this initiative holds the potential to strengthen partnerships with medical institutions and support organizations, contributing to the creation of a more comprehensive and interconnected support network for survivors of violence.

## COLLABORATION WITH THE SERVICE INDUSTRIES

The Union of Women's Association of Heraklion has established a collaborative relationship with the service industry in Heraklion. Specifically, since 2018, a major campaign is taking place each day prompted by the "International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women" (25th November). Around 33.000 custom table mats and coasters respectively have been printed and distributed to more than 30 cafés and restaurants in the city of Heraklion participating in the campaign. The mats and coasters depict each year a different message against violence and contain the contact information to the 24/7 helpline.

This activity was designed with a dual purpose. Firstly, to raise awareness and sensitise the general public on issues related to violence against

women, as well as provide a conversation starter in such social occasions. Secondly, to inform potential women or their support system of the operation of the 24/7 helpline. In particular, it often regarded that this social time is the best to introduce a topic of discussion such as violence against women and also being informed of the available service.

## **RESOURCES NEEDED**

Implementing this campaign along with the service industry involves several key resources. First and foremost, financial resources are needed for engaging graphic design services to create visually appealing and discreet designs for the table mats and coasters. Printing costs constitute a significant portion of the budget to produce an ample quantity for widespread distribution.

Materials are crucial, requiring resources for the procurement of high-quality, durable materials that can withstand the rigors of regular use in restaurant environments. Distribution logistics demand coordination efforts and resources for transportation, storage, and tracking systems to ensure the effective deployment of table mats and coasters to targeted establishments.

Collaboration with restaurants necessitates resources for meetings, presentations, and communication materials to gain their support in distributing and using the promotional items. Creating accompanying promotional materials, such as posters, banners, or information cards, is essential to explain the purpose of the campaign to restaurant staff and patrons.

Ongoing efforts, including resources for communication and follow-up with participating restaurants, are needed to ensure the sustained use of the table mats and coasters. Publicity and awareness campaigns require a budget for promoting the initiative through various channels, while feedback mechanisms and legal consultations contribute to the campaign's effectiveness and compliance with regulations.

Allocation of resources for evaluation, data collection, and reporting is essential to measure the campaign's success and gather insights for potential improvements. By strategically distributing resources across these

areas, the campaign can effectively raise awareness and provide a discreet support system for those in need.

## INTENDED RESULTS

By integrating the helpline number into the daily environment of these social spaces, the initiative provides discreet and accessible support for individuals experiencing violence. The increased visibility of the helpline number raises awareness about available support services, contributing to the reduction of stigma associated with seeking help.

Moreover, the campaign fosters community engagement as local businesses actively participate in promoting a supportive environment. Collaborating with restaurants and cafes not only extends the reach of support services but also establishes valuable partnerships, creating a network of businesses committed to addressing social issues. The positive impact on public relations showcases the organization's dedication to community welfare and mental health support.

The campaign's success can be measured through increased helpline utilization, feedback from participating businesses, and heightened public awareness. Regular evaluations will provide valuable insights for adjustments and improvements, ensuring the initiative's continued effectiveness. Ultimately, this campaign contributes to creating a community that actively addresses issues related to violence, offering a discreet and ongoing support system for those in need.

## REFLECTION

Practices that advertise the services of women's support organizations through innovative initiatives demonstrate a proactive and compassionate approach to addressing issues related to violence. Distributing hygiene wipes with helpline numbers and incorporating support information on restaurant table mats and coasters are commendable strategies that enhance accessibility and reduce the stigma associated with seeking help.

These practices recognize the importance of integrating support services into everyday environments, providing discreet avenues for individuals in need. By collaborating with medical facilities, restaurants, and other community spaces, women's support organizations foster a sense of community engagement and encourage a collective effort to combat violence.

Practices that advertise the services of women's support organizations through innovative initiatives demonstrate a proactive and compassionate approach to addressing issues related to violence. Distributing hygiene wipes with helpline numbers and incorporating support information on restaurant table mats and coasters are commendable strategies that enhance accessibility and reduce the stigma associated with seeking help. These practices recognize the importance of integrating support services into everyday environments, providing discreet avenues for individuals in need. By collaborating with medical facilities, restaurants, and other community spaces, women's support organizations foster a sense of community engagement and encourage a collective effort to combat violence.

Furthermore, these initiatives contribute to breaking down barriers by actively participating in the dialogue surrounding violence against women. They not only make support services more visible but also create partnerships that extend the reach of assistance.

The positive impact on public relations showcases the organization's commitment to community welfare, building trust and credibility. Additionally, the incorporation of feedback mechanisms and follow-up support services demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement and the provision of ongoing assistance.

In conclusion, these advertising practices go beyond mere promotion; they represent a holistic and community-oriented approach to addressing the multifaceted challenges of violence against women. By making support services an integral part of daily life, these initiatives create a more supportive and inclusive environment, fostering a culture where seeking help is normalized and actively encouraged.

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Community outreach is vital for women's support organizations to raise awareness, provide access to services, and build trust within local communities. By engaging directly with the community, these organizations can tailor their support services, address cultural nuances, and empower women to seek help. Outreach efforts also play a preventive role, intervening early in potential issues and fostering collaborative partnerships with other stakeholders. Breaking down stigmas, promoting open dialogue, and responding swiftly to crises are additional benefits of community engagement, contributing to the overall effectiveness and relevance of women's support initiatives.

## **StoP© - Districts without Partner Violence (Stadtteile ohne Partnergewalt) concept©**

The StoP© - Districts without Partner Violence (Stadtteile ohne Partnergewalt) concept was initiated and brought to life by Prof. Dr. Sabine Stövesand, professor at the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences (HAW), Faculty of Economics and Social Affairs, Department of Social Work. A basic requirement for establishing StoP in a district is the completion of a training course with 4 modules on violence prevention work and community work, community organizing and working with social spaces against partner violence.

StoP© is a well thought-out, high-quality, scientifically researched and sustainable concept based on the "Community Organizing" method in partner violence and domestic violence in the social sector. Therefore, StoP is protected by copyright to ensure quality and responsible implementation.

Community organizing is a method that originally comes from the USA and is intended to support people in shaping and changing their own living space collectively and in an organized manner: “The aim is for citizens to be able to constructively shape their own city. They are brought together and supported in standing up for their own interests and achieving a sustainable improvement in their living and working conditions.”

Community organizing can relate to many topics. In some projects, organizers go to the district and work with the residents to find out which topics are important to them and worth working on. In some projects, however, organizers go into a social space with a specific topic and look for people who are also interested in it and want to change something together. The StoP project belongs to the latter. From the start, StoP was about partner violence and about making a district or a (small) town non-violent.

In 2019, the Association of Autonomous Austrian Women's Shelters, AÖF, started the new community-oriented violence prevention project StoP - Districts without Partner Violence - in Vienna as a pilot project. Since then it was possible to establish and expand StoP in 25 locations (districts and municipalities) in all nine federal states of Austria. The Association of Autonomous Austrian Women's Shelters, AÖF, is responsible for the coordination and content for all locations in Austria. [www.aoeff.at](http://www.aoeff.at)

### **StoP - is a new and sustainable approach to violence prevention work**

The social space-oriented project combines concepts and practices of violence and victim protection work with social community work. This is a new way of protecting victims.

StoP therefore sees itself as an important link, supplement and enrichment to the central, long-established and professional work of women's shelters and victim protection organizations. StoP connects the work of the women's shelters, women's counseling centers and violence protection centers with civil society, especially with the immediate environment of those affected by violence as well as perpetrators: with the neighborhood, with the neighbors, with the residents and with all key people and multipliers in the respective district.

## Goals of StoP

The most important goal of StoP is to reduce femicide and violence against women and to bring about a change in awareness in society. StoP empowers and enables neighbours to show civil courage in case of domestic violence and take a clear stance against any form of violence. In StoP there is incredible potential for positive change in society because everyone can make a contribution to ending partner violence. An active neighborhood can bring about a societal “climate change” against patriarchy, so that violence against women is no longer ignored and tolerated.

# STOP INFORMATION SHEETS

Information sheets are posted in stairwells and public places to let the neighbours know how to react when they witness violence against women. They contain the most important information about support services in case of violence and how to behave as a witness of violence in their environment.

The following specific issues are addressed on the information sheets:

- Information about phone numbers and support offers for cases of violence such as the police or the women’s helpline against violence (0800 222 555) which is free of charge, available 24/7, even during weekends and public holidays.
- Promotion of the idea of civil courage and the message that violence is NOT a private matter. One recommendation is to interrupt the violence by calling the police or to ring the respective apartment’s doorbell, either alone or with somebody. Ask if everything is OK or ask for something ordinary such as sugar/flour - simply to interrupt the violence. Another recommendation is to talk to your neighbour(s) so that you can do something together. It is advised to talk openly about violence among partners and to signal to the victims that they do not need to be ashamed.
- Information on how to get involved with the cause beyond interventions mentioned above and how to get - in our case - in contact with StoP - Districts without partner violence ([www.stop-partnergewalt.at](http://www.stop-partnergewalt.at)).

During the Covid-19 related lockdowns (even the first one), staff members of StoP continued with ensuring that placards with information on how to react to violent situations were available in staircases of the houses and apartment buildings in the district. The volunteers of the StoP project supported this and also put up placards in their own or other houses/public spaces.

## RESOURCES NEEDED

Preparation of informational placards with the appropriate information for the location is a low-effort way to increase protection of women. The posters can be available online for anybody to print out and hang in their apartment buildings. In the case of StoP, the staff along with volunteers put up the information sheets in stairwells and the free to download placards were promoted via social media.

Please note that the StoP project is protected by copyright and replication of the programme is connected with completion of StoP training.

Link to the different languages: <https://stop-partnergewalt.at/materialien-links/>

## INTENDED RESULTS

Through the information sheets, people (affected by violence) are made aware of offers of help. Experience shows that neighbours want to get involved and help other people. They want to show civil courage but don't know exactly how. Partner violence happens in all social classes and ethnic communities, because of the patriarchal system. This is where StoP comes in. Neighbours are informed, motivated and sensitised to interrupt and stop violence. The taboo of intimate partner violence becomes the a public discussion within the neighbourhood. It is taken out of the private sphere and out of its invisibility. The willingness to be public about it and to intervene is promoted. Local people are encouraged to actively deal with the issue.

## DIFFICULTIES & RISKS

With this method (placards) no risks really occur.

# STOP WOMEN'S TABLES ONLINE

A centerpiece of the StoP project are action groups in the neighborhood, called women's and men's tables. These are round tables where neighbors acquire knowledge about violence against women and then learn to take an active stance against violence.

At the regular women's and men's tables, we exchange ideas about neighbourliness, civil courage, and violence in partnerships. Each women's/men's table focuses on a different topic and the schedule is changed. In addition to the exchange of content and discussions, experts are often invited, exercises and trainings are carried out, workshops are held or the topics are dealt with in a creative way. New topics and activities are usually developed based on wishes and suggestions from the group itself. Thus, each table and group have different approaches, but always the same goal: to stand up together against violence and to do something against domestic violence against women\* and intimate partner violence!

Since the beginning of April 2019, committed women from the neighbourhood of Margareten (the 5th district of Vienna) have been meeting every two weeks at the StoP women's tables and working together to put an end to intimate partner violence and domestic violence and talk openly about gender-based violence.

During the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent restrictions in 2020 women's tables were held online 10 times. After the very strict restrictions in 2020, it was common practice to meet outside in a park for the tables. Men's tables too were held online. The online tool which was used in the beginning was WhatsApp-Video Call, but then it switched to the online tool Zoom. The online tables were a good tool to invite more people (who were not based in Vienna) and to network, e.g. with other stop projects in Germany.

In 2021 four new Vienna City districts - Wieden, Mariahilf, Favoriten and Meidling - began to implement StoP. The first women's tables in Mariahilf and Meidling took place during the second widescale lockdown in Austria.

Online tables ensured that communication in the community regarding this topic could continue. Both benefits and disadvantages of the tables taking place online could be observed, e.g. reaching people at home who would not be able to leave children/elderly parents unattended, but also a lack of privacy in discussing sensitive topics.

## **RESOURCES NEEDED**

Well-connected staff is necessary to establish contacts with key people and multipliers in the neighbourhood. As the stop-project addresses all people regardless of their gender, it is important to have not exclusively female coordinators. It is necessary to build up a network in a neighbourhood, this means the staff needs to be seen in the neighbourhood (i.e. at different events and public spaces). Other necessary resources are a space where the frequent meetings (tables) can take place, or an online tool easy to use for many, e.g. Zoom or WhatsApp-Video Group Calls.

## **INTENDED RESULTS**

A new and expanded approach to violence prevention. Community work is combined with victim protection work. A sustainable violence prevention project. Civil society / the neighborhood is involved. StoP is an addition to existing victim protection work which of course cannot replace victim protection institutions (women's shelters, violence protection centers).

## **DIFFICULTIES & RISKS**

The StoP project is protected by copyright, which ensures qualitative feminist work. Difficulties in all projects who depend on volunteers are the necessary financial, social and time resources. Another difficulty is getting people to become active in an issue that they are not directly affected by. For some people it is also difficult to see the positive effects of prevention work.

# REFLECTION

“Say something. Do something” - this is the motto of StoP. StoP means building relationships in the neighbourhood and thereby making visible the big problem of intimate partner violence and domestic violence against women and children.

# CONCLUSIONS

Assessing and re-engineering the practices and processes of women support organizations is essential for ensuring their continued relevance, effectiveness, and impact. These organizations often operate in dynamic environments where the needs and challenges faced by women evolve. Regular assessments provide a systematic approach to understanding the strengths and weaknesses of current practices, allowing for strategic adjustments.

Efficiency and effectiveness are fundamental aspects of any support organization. Through assessments, organizations can identify inefficiencies, redundancies, or gaps in their processes, enabling them to streamline operations and enhance their ability to provide timely and targeted support to women in need.

Adaptability is another critical factor. Societal changes, legislative developments, and emerging issues affecting women's well-being necessitate a responsive and adaptable approach. Assessments help organizations stay attuned to these changes, ensuring that their practices remain relevant and effective in addressing the evolving needs of women. Optimizing resources is crucial for organizations working with limited funding and personnel. Through process re-engineering, organizations can identify areas where resources can be better allocated, promoting cost-effectiveness and maximizing the impact of their interventions.

Quality of services is paramount in women support organizations. Regular assessments and re-engineering efforts based on feedback from beneficiaries and stakeholders contribute to the continuous improvement of services. This client-focused approach enhances the overall experience for women seeking support and ensures that services meet the highest standards. Well and what needs improvement enables organizations to grow and refine their approaches continually.

Innovation and the adoption of best practices are facilitated through assessments. By staying open to new ideas and approaches, organizations can continuously improve their strategies, introducing innovations that may better address women's needs.

Moreover, assessments promote accountability and transparency. Sharing evaluation results with stakeholders builds trust, both within the organization and among external partners, donors, and the broader community.

Sustainable practices are integral to the longevity and impact of women support organizations. Assessments help identify areas where processes can be refined to ensure long-term sustainability, preparing the organization for scalability and continued effectiveness.

Finally, assessments provide opportunities for organizational learning. Understanding what works well and what needs improvement enables organizations to grow and refine their approaches continually.

In conclusion, the importance of assessing and re-engineering practices and processes in women support organizations cannot be overstated. It is a strategic imperative that ensures these organizations remain responsive, efficient, and impactful in their mission to support and empower women.



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