



BREAKING THE
CYCLE
OF VIOLENCE
against women

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ACRONYMS

CDV: Commission on Gender-based Violence and Domestic Violence
CoE: Council of Europe
CRPD: Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability
DV: Domestic Violence
DQĠ: Dar Qalb ta’ Ġesu’
EU: European Union
FITA: Foundation for Information Technology Accessibility
FRA: Fundamental Rights Agency
GBV: Gender-based Violence
LBTI: Lesbian, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex
MGG: Malta Girl Guides
MJEG: Ministry for Justice, Equality and Governance
NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation
REC: Rights, Equality and Citizenship
UOM: University of Malta
VAW: Violence Against Women
WAGGGS: World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts

1. INTRODUCTION

The Commission on Gender-based Violence and Domestic Violence within the Ministry for Justice, Equality and Governance is proud to present the final report of the project 'Breaking the Cycle of Violence', co-funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme 2014-2020 (REC) of the European Union (EU). The project aimed to complement the National Strategy and Action Plan on Gender-based Violence and Domestic Violence with the aim to implement the obligations established in the Council of Europe (CoE) Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention).

The main objective of this project was to identify the behaviours and attitudes towards violence in targeted groups and the need to break the cycle of violence by changing behaviours contributing to VAW, gender stereotypes/ inequalities and promote gender equality.

In the survey Violence against women: an EU-wide survey by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) which found that 15% of women in Malta have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a current or a previous partner since the age of 15. Furthermore, the survey found that across Member States, 16% of non-heterosexual women say they have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a male non-partner since the age of 15, compared to 12% of heterosexual women, whereas 11% non-heterosexual women have experienced this type of violence by female perpetrators, compared with 4% of heterosexual women. The survey also showed that 34% of women who have health problems or have a form of disability have experienced physical or sexual violence by a partner compared to 19% of those who do not have a health problem or a form of disability. Local research carried out by the Commission on Gender-based Violence and Domestic Violence (2014) also show an increasing number of migrant women seeking support services at emergency and second-stage shelters when compared to previous years where residents were mainly of Maltese origin.

Another area of concern which many a times has been questioned by various professionals working in the field of VAW and domestic violence is that a number of female victims who availed themselves of support services including women's shelters tend to return to the abusive relationship.

Taking into consideration these statistics, the project aimed to address the needs for further data collection, research, analysis and dissemination of results on the perception of domestic violence among the general population; to further empower victims and raise awareness among vulnerable groups; and identify and change negative attitudes and behaviours towards VAW and thus help them break the cycle of violence.

2. THE PROJECT

2.1 Project's logistics

The project Breaking the Cycle of Violence started its implementation in January 2018, with its end date set in June 2020. An extension of six months was granted, shifting the end date to December 2020. The project has a budget of approximately €350,000, being co-funded 80% by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme 2014-2020 of the European Union and 20% through National Funds. The project's outputs and deliverables were divided into four workstreams being implemented by nine project partners (including the lead at MJEG).



2.2 Project Partners

Main Partners

- University of Malta
- Malta Girl Guides
- Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability
- Migrant Women Association of Malta
- Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement

Associate Partners

- Agenzija Appogg - Foundation for Social Services
- The Scouts Association of Malta
- Programm Sebħ - Dar Qalb ta' Ġesù (DQĠ)

2.3 Project Targets

Implicated by the project activities	Target	Actual
Survivors of domestic abuse – living in second stage housing and living in the community	16	12
Women with disabilities	20	17
Migrant women	10	10
LBTI women	14	10
Lawyers/advocates	10	11
Public Service Employees	100	45
Human Resources	15	56
NGOs	20	33
General public – potential victims, bystanders and witnesses	500	500
Girl Guide and Scout Leaders	40	22
Youth Ambassadors	40	51
Children who would be trained by the Guide and Scout Leaders	400	400

2.4 Project's Workstreams

2.4.1 Workstream 0: Management and Coordination of the Project

This workstream consists of the management of the project. It ensures that all the project activities are implemented in an effective and efficient manner whilst respecting principles of time management and budgetary control.

2.4.2 Workstream 1: Mentoring Workshops

Workstream 1 was focused on developing training material for mentoring workshops and information sessions with the first target group – victims of VAW; and trained mentors in preparation for the delivery of the mentoring workshops. Following the sessions, a training pack was developed that may be replicated to other cohorts. At the end of the workshops and sessions, a certificate award ceremony was planned, which was also meant as an opportunity to bring together various NGOs.

2.4.3 Workstream 2: Research and Information Sessions

Workstream 2 was focused on providing mentoring workshops and one-to-one sessions for the other target groups – LBTI women, migrant women and women with disabilities. Following this, a training pack for each group was developed that may be adapted to other cohorts. At the end of the workshops and sessions, a certificate award ceremony was planned, which was also meant as an opportunity to bring together various NGOs. This Workstream also focused on raising awareness among children and young adults on gender stereotypes and norms that may lead to gender inequality and VAW through the Children's Educational Programme, the Youth Ambassadors Weekend and the Train the Trainer Weekend with Malta Girl Guides. Lastly, this Workstream was also aimed to increase data availability through research, namely, to identify attitudes towards VAW and behavioural change needed among the target groups; and to measure the behavioural change of the information sessions, training and educational programme on changing attitudes towards VAW.

2.4.4 Workstream 3: Research and Awareness Raising Campaign

This workstream focused on increasing data availability through research, namely, a telephone survey was carried out with the general public to identify their understanding of VAW and DV and their level of tolerance of them. The Workstream also focused on awareness raising among the general public, amongst professions such as lawyers, Human Resources, and public service employees. Falling under this Workstream are also the launch event, the final conference and the 'Be the Change Festival' – National Awareness Day.

2.5 Aims of the project

The overall aim of this project was to identify the behaviours and attitudes towards violence in targeted groups and the need to break the cycle of violence by changing behaviours contributing to VAW, gender stereotypes/ inequalities and promote gender equality. To further expand:

- a. To identify the behaviours and attitudes of victims experiencing violence against women (VAW) which impede them from breaking free from the cycle of violence;
- b. To raise awareness among vulnerable groups of women with a focus on women with disabilities; migrant women; and lesbian, bisexual, trans and intersex (LBTI) women, and for them to be informed about support services and protection measures;
- c. To raise awareness among children and youths, and actively engage boys and men in the fight against VAW;
- d. To raise awareness and encourage victims, potential victims and witnesses to report VAW and seek help;
- e. To develop and implement a set of mentoring workshops for victims who experiencing VAW to instigate the behavioural changes required in breaking the cycle of VAW; and
- f. To develop and implement an educational programme for children and young adults on VAW prevention and spread a clear message of zero tolerance to VAW.

2.6 Expected results

- a. Effective coordination and implementation of the workstreams through the setting up of core team meetings with all partners;
- b. Developing and implementing awareness raising tools that specifically target different groups who are more vulnerable to violence;
- c. Identify and change attitudes of the target groups towards VAW and behaviours that continue the cycle of violence;
- d. Empower participants and the general public by providing information on their rights, signs of violence, support services and on gender stereotypes and norms leading to gender inequality and VAW;
- e. A long-term multiplying impact on participants by instilling a sense of responsibility for them to become active in the fight against VAW, especially men and boys;
- f. Local, national and international fora participants will benefit from the project report and resources;
- g. To ultimately prevent incidents of violence and increase the rate of reporting.

3. PROJECT'S RESULTS

3.1 Mentoring Sessions with Target Groups

As part of this project, mentoring workshops were delivered to women victims of violence, women with disabilities, LBTI women, LBTI women residing at Corradino Correctional Facility and migrant women. The aims of these workshops were targeted to the specific needs of each group.

Female victims of violence attended workshops aimed at self-reflection and empowerment to help them break the cycle of violence. The sessions addressed independent living skills to better equip participants in finding employment and live independently and free from violence. Female victims of violence also attended one-to-one sessions with mentors to have a safe space where they may voice out any specific concerns in a confidential manner.

The other target groups attended workshops aimed at defining VAW, violence prevention, recognising signs of violence, support services available and self-defence techniques. One-to-one sessions were also made available to the participants.

All the participants received a certificate at the end of these sessions.

3.2 Online Training Packs

To ensure the sustainability of the project after the end date, the target group leader and mentors have worked together to create a training pack which is tailor made to each group – women with disabilities, LBTI women and migrant women. These sessions may therefore be replicated, and the content of these training packs may be adapted to meet the needs of the target group being trained. The training packs have also been certified for accessibility by the Foundation for Information Technology Accessibility (FITA) which makes them user-friendly and accessible to every user.

3.3 Research by the University of Malta

This project acknowledges the need and importance of data availability to be able to analyse trends of domestic violence and violence against women. For this reason, the project has partnered with the University of Malta to conduct pre- and post- training evaluation and assess the impact of the interventions. The aim of the impact evaluation was to identify the changes in the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours towards VAW and gender equality of the target groups – women with disability, migrant women, and LBT women – and children and youths members of the Malta Girl Guides and Scouts Association that took part in the training.

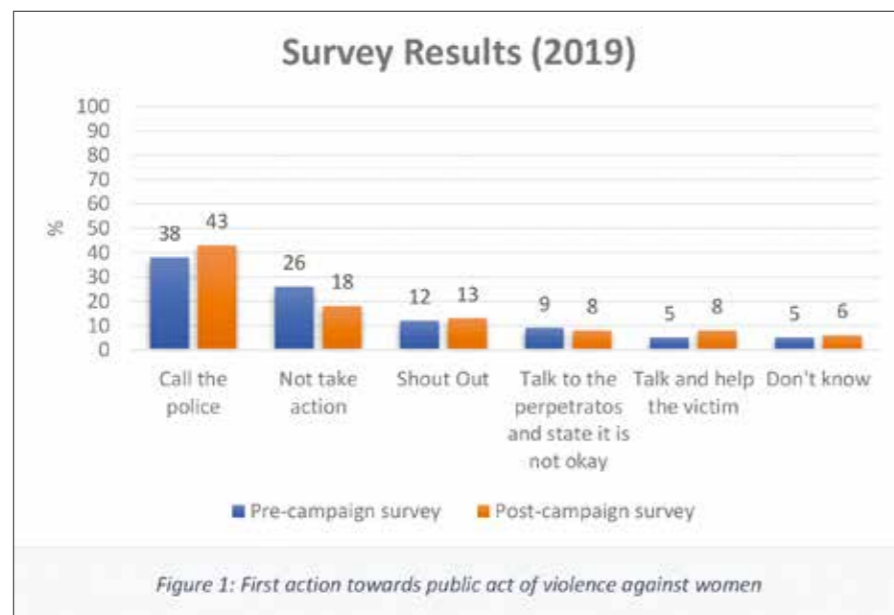
The results of this research show that in general respondents became more aware of what VAW is and the services available. Some changes in attitudes and beliefs were also reported. However, the inclination to intervene became slightly less likely, possibly due to the respondents becoming more aware of the complexity of the issue.

The main recommendations include:

- to standardise training (at least within the groups) & its assessment with a view to better testing its impact;
- to focus training on the more ambivalent/problematic issues;
- to utilise simpler instruments for the assessment of impact; and
- to give importance to follow-up programming to support the durability of impact.

3.4 Telephone Survey

A telephone survey was conducted to identify the general public's perception towards VAW. This is linked to the awareness raising campaign, whereby telephone surveys took place both before and after in order to measure the impact of the campaign and whether there was indeed a shift in attitudes towards VAW. A total of 1000 respondents participated in the pre-campaign survey and 1004 in the post-campaign survey. Some findings include:



3.5 Education

In collaboration with the Malta Girl Guides and the Scouts Association of Malta two train the trainer programmes were organised as part of the project whereby guides and leaders responsible for children and youths in their respective organisations were trained to implement the Voices against Violence Badges Curriculum – an international non-formal educational programme developed by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS). The Voices against Violence Badges Curriculum will in turn be implemented amongst approximately 600 children and young persons over five years old to enhance their awareness on gender inequality and violent relationships and empower them to identify signs of violence and avoid violent relationships.

Following these programmes, a youth ambassadors' weekend was organised to empower young leaders from various youth NGOs to act as ambassadors against violence.

Both deliverables involved non-formal education techniques such as workshops, brainstorming sessions, and discussions.

3.6 Be the Change Festival

The Be the Change Festival is made up of two parts – (1) the Final Conference (2) National Awareness Day.

The final conference of the project took place on Friday 25th September 2020. The conference served to share the results of the project, present the results of the UOM research report, and discuss ways of future collaboration between the partners.

Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, most foreign delegates that were planned to attend the conference had to cancel their plans. As such arrangements were made by the project team to have the conference recorded. The recording, together with the conference report, were made available to all those who were unable to attend, including foreign delegates. A sign language interpreter was also engaged to make the conference accessible to persons with hearing impairment.

The National Awareness Day was originally scheduled as a one-day campaign to advocate and raise awareness on VAW among the general public, organised by the Girl Guides and Scouts Association, where their members will present actions developed during the educational programme and engage other children and youths to advocate VAW.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions this event took place online on three separate dates. Tuesday 22nd September, Thursday 24th September, and Saturday 26th September 2020. The first two sessions were open to the public focused on awareness-raising. Some of the services like the Victims Support Unit and kellimni.com were presented.

The last event focused on presenting actions to raise awareness and advocate on VAW prepared by children of the different age groups and youth ambassadors. This session was primarily aimed to members girl guides and scouts, but the public was still invited to attend. Some of the topics covered were:

- Gender inequality & Discrimination
- Learning to Say NO
- How to express your feelings & bullying
- Sexism & Sexualisation / Homophobia / Transphobia/ Abused men / Warning Signs
- How to seek help

3.7 Information sessions

A total of seven information sessions were held on combatting VAW. Three audience groups were chosen for this purpose – Human Resources personnel, advocates and public service employees. In order to reach the greatest number of people one session was also held in Gozo.

3.8 Awareness Raising Campaign

Several awareness raising campaigns were organised at different stages of the project that were aimed at various target groups. These campaigns were disseminated across various mediums including social media, print media and through project website, amongst others.

3.8.1 Production of Video

Every year, the Domestic Violence Service provided by the Appoġġ agency encounters over 400 new cases of domestic violence. The majority of the victims that come forward are female; however, the services are accessible to everyone, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, age, racial background, religion or ability.



3.8.2 Online Awareness Raising Campaigns





3.8.3 Printed Awareness Raising Campaign

The leaflets produced as part of this project target three themes:

- What is gender-based violence?
- Gender-based violence at the workplace
- Gender-based violence and stereotyping

These leaflets are available in English and translated into Maltese, Italian, Serbian and Filipino.



3.8.4 2020 COVID Campaign

During the COVID-19 crisis the project team felt the need to go beyond the project's deliverables and focus on how this crisis may affect those people suffering violence in silence. The team prepared an extensive awareness raising campaign on various Maltese news portals whereby messages were disseminated in various languages to try and reach the highest number of people as possible.



This campaign was coordinated in conjunction with another campaign led by the Commission that used bus shelters across Malta and Gozo as its medium.



4. THE WAY FORWARD

The project is aimed at having a long-term impact on the involvement of different stakeholders in combating VAW. By instilling the sense of belonging in the cause and that every person can bring a change on violence against women, more people will take on an active role in this issue. Thus, instilling such sense of activism will act a multiplier and ensure sustainability of the activities, partnerships and results of the project.

With online media, a long lasting and accessible presence of the content is ensured. This will have more long-term impact especially for those women who identify the signs of violence and seek to reach out for help by looking for the relevant information online, on the project's platforms.

The cooperation and partnerships built throughout the project shall be maintained by CDV, through communication even after the end of the project. Furthermore, CDV shall continue the post-project monitoring and evaluation, to assess increase in reporting, improved service provision by professionals, and the reduction in re-victimisation of victims;

Moreover, project partners shall assume responsibility to continue to deliver the training to their members or target groups using their own financial resources, to ensure maximisation of the impact of the training developed.

CDV is confident that the continued cooperation and the extended implementing of the activities are possible, since the local stakeholders and partners involved already have commitment and experience with working in the fields.

Furthermore, tackling VAW is a pressing issue to Maltese Government. The project also complements other work being done in various spheres related to VAW, particularly the current revision of the legislation tackling gender-based violence and domestic violence in order to become fully in line with the Istanbul Convention.

The project focuses on specific target groups, which the needs assessment identified as more vulnerable than others. As a result, since the project focuses on prevention and greater awareness of violence, it is expected that the long-term impact of the project will result in more women aware of how to prevent violence and what action to take when faced with such violence. Ultimately, it is expected that in the long term, such efforts will lead to a decrease in the number of women who experienced violence in their lifetime.

5. LEARNING POINTS FROM THE EXTERNAL EVALUATOR

An external evaluator has evaluated the project and outlined some recommendations:

- The intersectional element between the different target groups needs improvement – however, the partners have showed willingness to collaborate between themselves and with CDV, and as such this project has paved the way for future collaboration.
- The training packs developed provide an opportunity to replicate the actions. The multiplier effect of this may need additional support. Language, physical accessibility and trained staff in the services provided by NGOs and state agencies are now recognized as barriers to access the services and need to be addressed in a coherent manner.
- Whilst this project has tackled information days with Human Resources, advocates and public service employees, further work is required across different sectors – such as police, advocates, justice system, medical personnel, employers' bodies, and those working in the educational field.
- From the research carried out, it became clear that more awareness is necessary around the themes of gender equality, the roles of women and men, and the autonomy of women. This may be an opportunity for future awareness raising campaigns.
- The importance of work with young people has emerged through this project. As such, a way should be found to incorporate programmes in the education system to address gender stereotypes, bullying, bodily autonomy and sexual relations. Working with young people and children will contribute to a society more based on the values of equality and human rights. It is also necessary to have more work targeted at boys, young men and men to bring about change in behaviours and attitudes.

6. CONCLUSION

The project Breaking the Cycle of Violence contributed to Malta's commitment to implement the obligations of the Istanbul Convention through the first national strategy and action plan on gender- based violence and domestic violence – Society's Concern: Vision 2020.

Particularly the project had a major research component to identify the impact of training on the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours towards VAW and gender equality in the target groups, children and youths; as well as to assess the change in public's perception and attitudes towards VAW through telephone surveys. Several training sessions were also organised for professionals working in various fields (human resources, public service employees, lawyers).

Awareness raising has been placed at the heart of both the strategy and the project with several campaigns taking place via different mediums with different themes, ultimately contributing towards the major objective to break the cycle of violence.

The end of the project coincides with the end of the strategy, and as such, the project may be considered as a steppingstone for the drafting of the future strategies. The success of the project in the fight against VAW guarantees that replication of its activities will yield positive results. The Commission remains committed to retain its efforts in fighting violence in all its forms, and ultimately to break the cycle of violence.