



**ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE  
REPORT  
2016**



COMMISSION ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
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# THE COMMISSION ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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## EDITORIAL

*Dr. Charlie Azzopardi*

*This conference was a timely effort in its attempt at highlighting Domestic Violence's standing on the national agenda. It was also an effective effort at reuniting people from different areas related to Domestic Violence in a single forum, thus enabling and empowering conversation around the necessary collaborative practice.*

Many conversations manifest that the major concerns still revolve around traditional stereotypes of Domestic Violence. Men are still seen as perpetrators and women as victims. New realities of Domestic Violence have hardly been absorbed, and the general feeling of the narrative proclaimed war on men, by women, to curb Domestic Violence. There is evident a phenomenological emphasis on punishment towards perpetrators. People still somehow conceive punishment as a solution. In workshop number 4, there were proposals that included the introduction of 'extremely harsher fines'. It is good to keep in

mind that policies based on such stereotyped ideas have failed to curb Domestic Violence and a new systemic understanding of Domestic Violence is needed. This aspect has also emerged in a recent research on families of prisoners (Azzopardi, 2016).

A systemic understanding shifts its attention to relational patterns while embracing the individual narratives co-constructing them. It empowers victims by providing them the opportunity to learn to protect themselves from the perpetrator and simultaneously dis-empowers the perpetrators by providing them an empathic opportunity with which they can learn to use alternative perspectives and ways to express themselves.

It is my view that Domestic Violence is not simply a matter of power and cultural agendas. Domestic Violence is a very complex dynamic involving gender difference, gendered brain processing, gendered neurological



differences, hormonal differences, and more, as expressed and constructed through language. This complexity is evidenced by the many failed attempts at curbing it, perpetrated by a decontextualized idea of power. This conference piloted some important realizations and ideas in this respect which deserve attention.

One of these realizations is that the violence dynamic is imbued in culture, the establishment and its systems, politics, the Church, and the major

power of providing structural care (that is money, a good house, cars, and all that is basically needed by the woman to provide domestic matters). This socio-cultural and gendered power attribution provides operational stereotypes to all, including educational, political, religious, employment, and all the other sectors.

Another important systemic realization is that men need to be empowered, rather than blamed, for their efforts

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***Perpetrators need to be addressed with help rather than with punishment.***

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pillars of the social fibre. It is the relational dynamics between these that continue to perpetuate the power expression difference and the stereotyped ideas around such expressions. At a micro level, such dynamics involve the equal denigration of womanhood and manhood, albeit in different ways. Women are attributed the sole power of domestic matters (that is the rearing of children, house chores, maintaining relationships, etc) and men are attributed the sole

in contributing to the welfare of their families and society. The tactic used until recently did not support the promotion of difference. Attacking men's 'power' by female power only strikes men's increasing sense of insecurity, which in return leads men to be more aggressive in their attempt to hold on to their apparent power.

This leads to another realization which is that perpetrators (men or

women) need to be empowered in different ways. Perpetrators need to be addressed with help rather than with punishment. The systemic nature of Domestic Violence calls for empowering perpetrators to use other means of communicating their insecurity, their fear, their anxiety and the host of feelings that triggers their violence. A systemic understanding empowers victims to learn to protect themselves.

Empowerment in fact emerges as the most popular term during this conference. The term was mentioned by both ministers present for the conference, by Mr. Gerada in the introduction, and other distinguished participants along the course of the conference.

We need therefore to amplify current constructions of Domestic Violence and move away from the cause-effect, uni-directional perspective, towards a systemic understanding of the wider context within which Domestic Violence is embraced.

Curbing Domestic Violence requires an orchestrated collective effort of many bodies involved directly or indirectly with Domestic Violence narratives. We all need to learn to appreciate the interconnectedness between the apparently different and

apparently unrelated areas like politics, education, religion, justice, health, media and so on. We also need to empower and facilitate collaboration between different levels of intervention including policy makers, victims of Domestic Violence, perpetrators of Domestic Violence, workers in the sector and so on. This systemic and ecological nature of Domestic Violence definitely calls for a systemic position to resolve it.



# EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS

*Mr. Joseph Gerada, Commissioner, Commission on Domestic Violence*

**N**agħti merħba lil kulhadd għal din il-konferenza nazzjonali, li qed tlaqqa' flimkien professjonisti u attivisti minn xelta wiesa ħafna ta' setturi, li kollha għandhom missjoni waħda quddiemhom, dik li jaħdmu biex il-valuri ta' rispettu u ugwaljanza mhux biss jittkellmu dwarha, imma jarawhom prattikati fir-relazzjonijiet ta' bejn in-nies, b'mod partikolari bejn dawk li b'xi mod ikunu wegħdu lealta' u appoġġ lejn xulxin.

Tajjeb għalhekk li nistqarru l-kreditu tagħna llum fil-bidu tal-konferenza, li ukoll taħbat l-ewwel konferenza ta' din il-kommissjoni l-ġdida li twaqqfet fl-Lulju li għadda.

Għalina il-vjolenza domestika mhix sempliċiment imġieba inaċċettabbli li trid tiġi eliminata, imma nemmnu, u għalhekk nippromwovu, il-valur tas-Self Determination għan-nies kollha, speċjalment f'ambjent ta' relazzjonijiet intimi. Għalina il-vjolenza abbażi tal-generu mhix sempliċiment imġieba li nistmerru għaliex ma'

għandha l-ebda post f'soċjeta ċivili u evoluta, imma minflok nemmnu fiċ-ċelebrazzjoni tad-diversita' u t-tiftix ta' hena għal persuni kollha, huma min huma.

Għalina l-vjolenza mhix sempliċiment imġieba, li aħna naħdmu biex neliminaw imma hija l-forza li ssuq l-impenn tagħna biex nippromwovu rispettu u inkluzjoni għal kulhadd, kif ukoll id-dritt ta' kull persuna li taħdem biex il-ħolm tagħha jsir realta' u l-potenzjal kollu tagħha jkun realiżżat.

Dan hu l-kreditu tagħna. Pero dan il-kreditu huwa l-kreditu tas-soċjeta' tagħna kollha għaliex diġa poġġejniġi fil-liġijiet tagħna kif ukoll dalwaqt ikollna liġi ġdida li tkopri ukoll il-vjolenza abbażi tal-generu.

Dan ifisser li l-ħarsien tal-valuri ta' rispettu, ugwaljanza, awto-determinazzjoni u diversita' huma valuri li s-soċjeta' tagħna taqşam u trid tara mħaddma fil-ħajja ta' kuljum.



*Mr Joseph Gerada speaking to the audience at the conference.*

Photo: DOI - Anthony Sultana

Għalhekk jagħmel sens it-titlu tal-konferenza li l-vjolenza domestika u l-vjolenza kontra n-nisa hija kwistjoni ta' kulhadd. U dan hu l-messaġġ ta' din il-konferenza, li l-vjolenza, speċjalment f'kuntast ta' relazzjoni intima mhix kwistjoni personali u privata imma hija reat, offiċja serja għas-soċjeta' kollha. U għalhekk hija s-soċjeta' kollha li għandha interess taħdem biex dan jjeqaf u ma' jseħx aktar. Hija s-soċjeta' kollha li trid torganizza lilha nnifisha biex bl-aħjar mod teduka, tgħallim, tinfluwenza, turi, tammonixxi u anki tikkastiga fejn ikun hemm il-bżonn.

Ħafna minn din ir-responsabbilta' taqa' fuqna l-entitajiet pubbliċi u l-organizzazzjonijiet volontarji li flimkien nistgħu naħdmu biex noholqu l-ambjent adatt biex is-soċjeta timmobilizza lilha nnifisha kontra din il-problema u tirbaħ.

Aħna lkoll flimkien irridu nkunu l-ghodda, il-mezz, l-interlokuturi biex is-soċjeta' tagħmel dan l-avvanz. L-imgħallem hija s-soċjeta u l-imgħallem qed iħares lejna bħala għodda effettiva biex jiskolpi livell għola ta' identita', ta' dak li jagħmilna ċivili bħala nazzjon.

Qed nagħmel dan il-punt għaliex ikun hemm min jaħseb li għaliex aħna naħdmu f'dawn l-istituzzjonijiet jew NGOs, allura jkollna t-tendenza li nieħdu fuq spallejna il-problema, ngħamluha tagħna u nippruvaw insolvuha b'dak li naħsbu jaħdem l-aħjar. Meta ngħamli hekk, inkunu qed nirriskjaw li naljenaw lis-soċjeta' minn kwistjoni li hija propju tas-soċjeta' u li s-soċjeta' trid taħdem biex telimina.

Għalhekk huwa importanti li nifhmu li qatt ma' nistgħu nelimaw il-kwistjoni tal-vjolenza jekk naħsbu li dan nistgħu

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## **[l-eliminazzjoni tal-vjolenza domestika] huwa possibli jekk ngħamluh mas-soċjeta’.**

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ngħamluh għas-soċjeta’, pero dan huwa possibli jekk ngħamluh mas-soċjeta’. Is-suċċess jiddependi minn nisġa intelligenti ta’ kollaborazzjoni u integrazzjoni ta’ ħiliet u rizorsi li jiffaċilitaw it-tkattir ta’ l-enerġija u l-impenn fil-livell tal-komunita’.

U għalhekk it-titlu tal-konferenza ‘violence against women and Domestic Violence is everybody’s business’. Din hija l-viżjoni tal-kummissjoni l-ġdida, kummissjoni li mhux tagħmel xogħol għas-soċjeta’ imma tkun xprun biex tiffaċilita l-ħidma ta’ dawk li jridu jagħmlu differenza.

Għalhekk waħda mill-inizjattivi li ttieħdu f’dawn l-aħħar ġimgħat kienu t-twaqqif, b’suċċess ngħid, ta’ netwerk tal-għaqdiet volontarji li jaħdmu f’dan is-settur. Fil-fatt l-ewwel laqgħat wasslu biex dawn l-għaqdiet sa jagħmlu għall-ewwel darba marċ ta’ solidarjeta’ minn Blata l-Bajda sal-Belt nhar l-4 ta’ Diċembru, biex tikber il-kuxjenza kontra il-vjolenza.

Inizjattiva oħra importanti ħafna li qed naħdmu fuqha hija li tinholoq Task Force ta’ entitajiet pubbliċi li

b’xi mod għandhom konnessjoni ma’ dan is-settur, ħafna minnhom rappreżentati hawn illum. Dan huwa importanti għaliex igib persuni b’impenn wieħed flimkien, b’forza ta’ ħsbijiet u b’esperjenza li twassal għal titjeb, u forsi tibdil fejn hemm bżonn, tas-sistemi li huma intenzjonati biex iwensu lil vittmi u jaħdmu kontra l-imġieba abbużiva. Nittamaw li kmieni s-sena l-ġdida nifformalizzaw dan l-arrangement.

Ir-riċerka sa tkun fattur ieħor li din il-kummissjoni se tħares lejha biex niżguraw li jkollna informazzjoni korretta kemm jista’ jkun u li d-deċizjonijiet li nieħdu jkun bbażati fuq studji biex inkunu kredibbli f’dak li nagħmlu. Infatti bħalissa l-kummissjoni hi parteċipi jew qed timbotta xejn inqas minn ħames proġetti differenti ta’ riċerka.

Mar-riċerka jmur it-taħrig u dan ukoll sa jkun fattur importanti fil-ħidma tal-kummissjoni. Bħalissa qed naħdmu biex niffinalizzaw arrangamenti ma’ konsulent Awstrijak biex jiġi Malta u jgħati taħrig dwar il-konvenzjonni ta’ Istanbul. Dan kien possibbli biss,

permezz tal-kollaborazzjoni mal-qrati b'mod partikolari l-kumittatt tat-taħrig biex jinstabu dati fil-kalendarju tal-qorti, għal dan it-taħrig. Imma l-istess taħrig sa jingħata lil NGOs, pulizija, avukati, social workers u professjonisti mediċi. Sibna kollaborazzjoni minn dawn kollha.

Nista' nibqa' għaddej dwar diversi inizjattivi li qed jittiehdu fis-settur imma tajt ftit eżempji biex insostni dak li għidt qabel li s-suċċess jigi minn kollaborazzjoni, qsim ta' informazzjoni, ħsibijiet u riżorsi, inkluzjoni ta' kulhadd, li jridu jaħdem għal dan il-għan, li neliminaw il-vjolenza f'kull forma tagħha imma b'mod partikolari fir-relazzjonijiet intimi.

Dan għaliex nafu li min juża' l-forza ma jsirx aktar b'saħħtu imma jsir aktar żbaljat.

Qabel nikkonkludi nixtieq ngħid grazzi lil Ministri Helena Dalli u Michael Farrugia preżenti għal din il-konferenza għaliex dan juri biċ-ċar li l-impenn huwa mifrux sal-ogħla livelli tal-amministrazzjoni u dan jawgura tajjeb ħafna.

Filwaqt li nerga, mill-ġdid nagħtikom Merħba, nixtieq ilkom ġurnata tajba u ġurnata fejn noholqu relazzjonijiet ġodda waqt li nsaħħu dak li diġa għandna.



**STOP  
VIOLENCE**

managed by the Commission on  
Domestic Violence.





# SPEECH BY HON. HELENA DALLI

*Minister for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties*

**G**ħeżiež kollegi u ħbieb, huwa ta' pjaċir għalija li nindirizzakom waqt din il-konferenza annwali tal-Kummissjoni dwar il-Vjolenza Domestika.

Din is-sena l-Kummissjoni għażlet it-tema 'Violence against women and Domestic Violence – Everybody's business'. Dan għaliex l-għan ta' din il-konferenza huwa li tiġbor flimkien professjonisti mill-oqsma kollha, fosthom entitajiet pubbliċi, kif ukoll NGOs, sabiex jaħdmu aktar flimkien għall-protezzjoni tal-vittmi – u dawk kollha li jistgħu jisfgħu vittmi – kif ukoll għal għarfien dwar il-vjolenza kontra n-nisa u l-vjolenza domestika.

F'dan ir-rigward il-Ministeru tiegħi qed jagħmel ħafna xogħol. Fil-fatt, jumejn ilu ipprezentajt fil-Parlament l-abbozz ta' liġi dwar il-Vjolenza Abbażi tal-Ġeneru u l-Vjolenza Domestika għall-ewwel qari tiegħu. Hawnhekk nieħu l-opportunità biex niringrazzja lilkom preżenti, kif ukoll kull persuna li pparteċipat fil-konsultazzjoni pubblika li nedejna f'Settembru li għadda

f'seminar li organizza l-Ministeru tiegħi fil-Berġa ta' Kastilja. Hu permezz tal-kontribuzzjonijiet tagħkom li l-liġi se tkun waħda b'saħħitha u timmira li tipproteġi kull individwu mill-vjolenza u li tplementa l-Konvenzjoni ta' Istanbul b'mod sħiħ fil-liġi Maltija.

Din il-proposta ta' liġi ser tieħu post l-Att preżenti dwar il-Vjolenza Domestika u se tirrifirma l-Kummissjoni preżenti. Permezz tagħha se nwwessgħu l-mandat ta' din il-Kummissjoni billi lil hinn mill-vjolenza domestika, issa l-Kummissjoni ser tkun responsabbli wkoll mill-vjolenza abbażi tal-ġeneru.

Fost funzjonijiet oħrajn, ser ikun id-dmir ta' din il-Kummissjoni li tagħti lill-Istat il-parir espert tagħha dwar dawn l-oqsma, u tagħti r-rakkomandazzjonijiet tagħha lill-Istat dwar il-miżuri li hi tara neċessarji biex niġġieldu u nipprevjenu l-vjolenza. Flimkien mal-Istat, il-Kummissjoni ser tkun responsabbli wkoll minn Pjan Nazzjonali dwar il-vjolenza abbażi tal-ġeneru u l-vjolenza

domestika. Dan il-pjan ser ikun metodu komprensiv ta' kif bhala pajjiż nistgħu naffaċċjaw u negħlbu l-problema ta' vjolenza li qed ixkekkinha bhala soċjetà. Din il-proposta ta' liġi ser timponi ċertu obbligi fuq l-iStat innifsu sabiex itejjeb l-istituzzjonijiet tiegħu u joffri rimedji aqwa għall-vittmi ta' vjolenza, flimkien ma' miżuri oħra ta' prevenzjoni. Dan l-abbozz qiegħed jipproponi riformi wesgħin f'liġijiet oħra, speċjalment fil-Kodiċi Kriminali. Dawn l-emendi jintroduċu kuncetti ġodda u jtejbju oħrajn li diġà jeżistu sabiex ikollna qafas legali b'saħħtu li kemm il-vittmi kif ukoll il-Qrati tagħna jistgħu jibbażaw ruħhom fuqhom.

Qed nintroduċu definizzjoni wiesa' ta' x'inhu stupru, u qed nemendaw il-pieni għal offiżi sesswali sabiex jirriflettu verament il-gravità tal-att li jkun seħħ. Qed inneħħu wkoll il-medjazzjoni mandatorja f'każijiet fejn ikun hemm passat ta' vjolenza domestika, għaliex tali medjazzjoni narawha bhala trawma addizzjonali għal min ma jkunx irid jgħaddi minnha. Qed insaħħu wkoll l-Ordinijiet ta' Protezzjoni, biex

verament joffru sigurtà lil min ikollu bżonnhom, u qed nintroduċu ordnijiet ta' protezzjoni b'urġenza, għal meta, anka qabel il-proċedura fil-Qorti, persuna tkun f'periklu evidenti.

Il-Ministeru tiegħi se jkun qed jikkontribwixxi għat-tema ta' dil-konferenza b'mod dirett. Fil-fatt se jkun qed isir xogħol permezz ta' proġett fuq perjodu ta' sentejn kofinanzjat mill-Unjoni Ewropea taħt it-titlu 'Full Cooperation – Zero Violence'. Dan il-proġett ser jibda f'Jannar li ġej, b'riċerka kwalitattiva mill-Università ta' Malta sabiex nifhmu aħjar x'inhuma d-diffikultajiet illi l-vittmi jiltaqgħu magħhom meta jfittxu l-għajjnuna għand professjonisti differenti.

Ma' dan, l-Università ta' Worcester ser tkun qed tagħti tahrig komprensiv lill-professjonisti fosthom is-social workers, il-pulizija, it-tobba u l-infermiera tal-kura primarja, il-counsellors u l-għalliema tal-PSCD u tal-guidance, kif ukoll lill-għaqdiet volontarji sabiex dawn iniedu flimkien pjan ta' hidma, protocols u standard operating

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**... apprezzajt ħafna l-ideat  
li bdew ħergin minn dan  
in-network ġdid.**

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*Hon. Minister  
Helena Dalli speaking  
to the audience at  
the conference.*



Photo: DOI - Anthony Sultana

procedures sabiex jissahħah u jitjeb l-koperazzjoni u l-koordinament bejn dawn il-professjonisti. Il-Kummissjoni dwar il-vjolenza domestika ser tkun qed tmexxi numru ta' laqghat ma' dawn il-professjonisti biex tiffaċilita il-koordinament. Fl-aħħar mill-aħħar, dan il-proġett ser ikun qed iqajjem għarfien dwar il-vjolenza.

B'apprezzament kbir ukoll nilqa' l-inizjattiva li ħadet il-Kummissjoni dwar il-Vjolenza Domestika meta waqqfet network ta' professjonisti li jaħdmu fil-qasam tal-vjolenza abbażi tal-ġeneru u l-Vjolenza Domestika biex jghinu lil xulxin u jaħdmu aħjar flimkien. Kelli l-opportunità li nattendu għall-ewwel laqgħa u apprezzajt ħafna l-ideat li bdew ھerġin minn dan in-network ġdid. Naf li mmedjament wara din il-laqgħa, diversi minn dawk preżenti bdew jaħdmu flimkien taħt

it-tmexxija ta' Dar Merħba Bik biex fl-4 ta' Diċembru ssir mixja biex jikber l-għarfien kontra din il-problema.

Twaqqfet ukoll paġna fuq l-internet biex intom il-professjonisti tkunu tistgħu taqsmu flimkien l-esperjenzi u x-xogħol tagħkom fejn titgħallmu minn xulxin.

Din is-sena il-Kummissjoni qed tiehu sehem fil-kampanja ta' għarfien u attivizmu: 16-il jum ta' attivizmu kontra vjolenza abbażi tal-ġeneru li uffċjalment tibda fil-25 ta' Novembru u tagħlaq fl-10 ta' Diċembru, imma aħna qed nibdew mill-lum.

Hemm ippanjati diversi attivitajiet, diskussjonijiet u interventi fil-midja fejn se tiġi diskussa l-Vjolenza Domestika u dik abbażi tal-ġeneru.

Qegħdin jiġu ppubblikati u mqassma fuljetti ta' informazzjoni dwar il-Konvenzjoni ta' Istanbul – għall-ewwel darba bil-lingwa Maltija – filwaqt li sa jiġu mixgħula diversi postijiet fosthom il-Bieb tal-Bombi, Kastilja, u l-Funtana ta' quddiem is-sixth form t'Għawdex, bil-kulur uffiċjali ta' din il-kampanja: l-oranġjo.

Nemmen li dan ix-xogħol bejn l-entitajiet pubbliċi u l-NGOs ikompli isaħħaħ id-djalogu soċjali u jagħti importanza għall-prevenzjoni mill-vjolenza u protezzjoni li daww kollha li b'xi mod jew ieħor qed jgħaddu minn din l-esperjenza – esperjenza li ċċaħhad il-libertà, tneżża kull forma ta' ugwaljanza u tkisser l-iżvilupp soċjali u emozzjonali tal-persuna.

Għalhekk nemmen li bl-implimentazzjoni tal-ligi u t-tishih tas-servizzi niżguraw illi l-vittmi jingħataw l-protezzjoni li jisthoqilhom sabiex id-drittijiet tagħhom jiġu l-ewwel kif inhu xieraq.

Nawgura li din il-konferenza thalli l-frott mixtieq biex pajjizna jkompli jimxi 'l quddiem f'dan il-qasam.

## PANEL DISCUSSION: TOWARDS A SHARED COMMITMENT AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

***The members of the panel were Hon. Helena Dalli, Hon. Michael Farrugia, Insp. Joseph Busutill, Ms. Sandra Cortis, Dr. Mary Debono Borg, Ms. Ruth Sciberras, Supt. Dennis Theuma and Dr. Denis Vella Baldacchino. The discussion was moderated by Mr. Joe Gerada.***

The panel discussion was aimed at creating a space for conversation to promote a better understanding of the current state of affairs as well as to promote a collaborative approach to Domestic Violence among different ministries and bodies. This will hopefully empower all those participating to collectively come up with practical ways to improve the current state of affairs.

It was immediately clear that a collaborative approach is needed in order to achieve a coherent approach to Domestic Violence, as well as, to provide the victim with a respectful way of dealing with their issues. The management of Domestic Violence

is a complex matter involving various areas including health, the police, the justice system, welfare system and more. It was also suggested that the Local Councils shall be involved in providing a front line service to victims of Domestic Violence. It is increasingly being recognized that such conversations shall continue to ensure that all those involved orchestrate their efforts towards a fruitful end.

The education system is making ample efforts in preventing and addressing this issue in schools. It was stressed that words are not enough to express our commitment towards addressing this pervasive issue. Adults need to role model good and effective behavior to the young. Adults have to be thought to act as role models. In the education system there was also the engagement of many professionals to support in this and other initiatives taken and policy implementation. The Education department is already liaising with the Child Protection Services and using other professional services.

A systemic approach to Domestic Violence will locate the major stakeholders within the wider context. For example there was the idea that the system needs to provide families with all the professional services in their homes. This vision lacks other options which can be more viable, like outsourcing of professional services of psychologists, psychotherapists, family therapists, educators, counsellors, managers, etc. who can provide professional care.

There are programmes which matured over the years. Teachers, which are recognized as doing a very good job in transmitting good values by being role

models to children, also need further training in early detection of problems related to Domestic Violence.

The impact that Domestic Violence leaves on children is enormous and children often develop diagnosable conditions as a way to cope. It has to be mentioned that presenting complaints have become very complex and because of this professionals need to collaborate even more as no one is really an expert. Parents also need to be invited on board if professional intervention in Domestic Violence is to be successful.

***A salient argument that was raised, involved the routine that it is often the victim and the children that leave home after violence and not the aggressor.***



There is a legal side to Domestic Violence as well. A salient argument that was raised involved the routine that it is often the victim and the children that leave home after violence and not the aggressor. Of course, this is a challenging situation. It definitely calls for collaboration between all entities as individually no entity, on its own, can achieve much.

The police, while agreeing that in principle it should be the aggressor that leaves the matrimonial home and not the victim, there should be a protocol, agreed to by all stakeholders, which explains the exact procedures to follow, in such cases. This will eliminate differences in professional presence and orientation, especially when it comes to the police where one policeman would deal with a case differently from another one. This difference needs to be eliminated.

Such protocol would ensure fair and equal treatment.

Questions from the audience initially focused on the perpetrator's services and the procedure involved in these services. Minister Helena Dalli spoke about how she thinks there should be a shelter for men, like there is for women. This shelter will include services of psychologists and social workers who will be working with the perpetrator.

Ways to protect the family are needed as the current ones may not be working effectively enough to ensure the safety of victims once the perpetrators are out of prison or released from arrest. A question from the audience also addressed the protection order and whether a protection order is normally issued in separation cases. It is a common practice that the victims



of Domestic Violence often have to face the perpetrator during court proceedings.

A question was asked about how the system can change to avoid such face to face confrontations. Recently there were situations where the perpetrator attacked his victim during court proceedings in the Hall in front of the magistrate. One suggestion involved the use of video-conferencing and video links as is usually the practice with rape cases. It is wise to extend such practice to Domestic Violence cases as well.

Minister Michael Farrugia spoke about the introduction of video-conferencing in the new law addressing care orders. He said that the Icelandic Model of the Children's House shall be soon adopted in Malta. This allows children to give evidence away from court while the magistrate and lawyers, through the use of video conferencing or recording conduct their line of questioning. However, even in this regard the magistrate and lawyers pose their questions through the assistance of a specially trained professional who communicates with the child in a language and manner that is easily understood and friendly for the minor.

The environment would be designed to be child friendly with colourful playrooms and play therapy.

The practice shall be led by the notion of the best interest of children and therefore children should be protected during delicate legal proceedings. The premise for this project has already been identified and the training of professionals is in preparation.

There were more interventions that emphasized over and over again that collaboration between services is needed to address Domestic Violence. It was pointed out that the fact that there are only women's shelters has led to a situation where it is implied that it is the victim and sometimes her children that should leave the matrimonial home. The creation of Men's shelters will change this paradigm and shift to a situation where it is the perpetrator who moves to a shelter and where the person gets the professional help needed.

It is now time to pass from theorizing to action and appeals have been made throughout this conference to ensure that such action is on the agenda. In addition delegates commented on the need for improved co-ordination between professionals when conducting interventions in particular though not exclusively, psychologist, counselors and psychotherapists. Nevertheless a number of delegates remarked about the positive developments in policy and services that have taken place.

The audience also commented on the reporting system and how professionals at times fail to report cases. A particular case was mentioned in which a 14 year old was raped by her 31 year old boyfriend. The girl benefitted from services addressing her needs but none of the professionals involved with her reported the boyfriend from 'abusing' a 14 year old child.

This is the first time that a panel consisting of so many stakeholders involved in the legislative, administrative, and service provision fields met together in a public forum to discuss such matters relating to Domestic Violence.

The most salient emergence of this forum was the visible need to adopt a systemic approach that guarantees that all stakeholders collaborate towards the co-construction of new narratives about effective collective interventions to curb Domestic Violence.

A large, bold white number '4' is positioned on the right side of the image. The background is a solid yellow color. A white diagonal line runs from the top left towards the bottom right, passing behind the number '4'.

4

# MEDIA & MASCULINITY: EFFECTS ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE & HOW MEN CAN HELP

*presented by Dr. Brenda Murphy and Mr. Aleksandar Dimitrijevic*

*This presentation portrayed effectively how often society takes for granted, the subtle, yet pervasive gendered messages disseminated through media. It has been argued that media is strongly related to society in a circular fashion and that it both shapes and reflects our reality.*

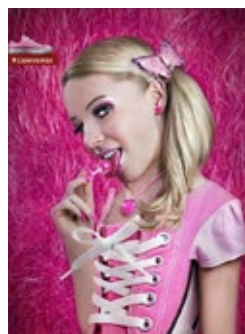
This presentation demonstrated the dominance of the current patriarchal narrative. It was pointed out that the major pillars of society tend, although to varying degrees, to contribute to the perpetuation of gender stereotypes. Such pillars like the government, the church, the educational institutions, the media and the family continue to propagate male dominance as a normal and natural state of affairs.

They continue to 'describe today's society, which is characterized by current and historic unequal power relations between women and men, whereby women are systematically disadvantaged and oppressed'. It is for this reason that women remain under-

represented in key state institutions, in decision-making positions and in employment and industry. Women in minority groups continue to 'face multiple oppressions in ... society, as race, class and sexuality intersect with sexism'. Male violence on women is a key feature of a deeply rooted patriarchal mentality. Some of the images portrayed are included below.

By labeling Domestic Violence as a women's issue men are being left out of their responsibility in building a violence free society. However, domestic violence affects men too, both as victims and perpetrators and they remain the ignored part of the equation. Yet, men can do a lot to help curb Domestic Violence.

At an individual level men can become aware of Domestic Violence, their role in it, and how it is propagated. The subtleness of propagation of sexist ideas are worth becoming aware of as they infiltrate jokes, language, art and also business. At a community level





men can contribute their altruism and become more involved in combating sexism and violence on women without shame.

Men could easily challenge other men about their values about women and men in society. At an activist level men could contribute more in promoting women as equals and voicing their altruistic position against violence generally and against women in particular.

Men can therefore do a lot of prevention work and commit themselves to eradicate traditional masculine stereotypes about gender.



5

## ATTENDING TO THE HIDDEN VOICE

*A dialogue by Ms. Maria Mangion and Ms. Charlene Barbara*

**D**in il-prezentazzjoni kkonsistiet fi djalogu bejn is-Sinj. Mangion u s-Sinj. Barbara. Is-Sinj. Mangion hija professjonista li taħdem fil-qasam tal-Vjolenza Domestika fi ħdan l-Aġenzija Appoġġ waqt li s-Sinj. Barbara hija persuna li għaddiet minn esperjenzi rilevanti. L-għan ta` dan id-djalogu kien li tiġi prezentatata l-importanza tal-involviment ta` nies li użaw, qed jużaw jew li possibiliment jistgħu jiġu bżonn is-servizzi eżistenti.

Is-Sinj. Mangion għamlet riċerka fuq il-Vjolenza Domestika u waqt dan id-djalogu prezentat erba' punti li ħarġu minn din ir-riċerka. Is-Sinj. Barbara rrapreżentat l-vuċi ta` min għex ċertu esperjenzi u prezentat ir-reazzjonijiet tagħha għal dak li ħareġ mir-riċerka msemmija.





## DJALOGU

*Is-Sinj. Mangion:* Diversi sitwazzjonijiet iwaqqfu lin-nisa u t-tfal milli jfittxu l-għajnuna formali tal-ħaddiema soċjali, pulizija, jew xelters meta jesperjenzaw Vjolenza Domestika. Diversi fatturi ġew identifikati, fosthom nuqqas ta' riżorsi fis-servizzi preżenti. Meta ngħid nuqqas ta' riżorsi tista' tkun dik finanzjarja imma ukoll li per eżempju ċertu professjonisti jkollhom nuqqas ta' għarfien tad-dinamika tal-Vjolenza Domestika. Xi ħsibijiet għandek f' dan ir-rigward?

*Is-Sinj. Barbara:* Il-biża tal-vittma normalment tkun li jekk tersaq għall-għajnuna s-sitwazzjoni aktar hemm ċans li tiggrava milli tissolva. Għalhekk huwa importanti li meta l-vittma tagħmel il-kuraġġ li fittex il-għajnuna din issibha minn kwalunkwe servizz f'hinha u f'waqtha. Dan għaliex biex vittma tkun waslet li fittxet l-għajnuna normalment ma tkunx l-ewwel darba li giet abbużata u tkun ilha tissaporti ħafna episodji. Għalhekk huwa importanti li l-professjonisti jkunu ingħataw it-taħriġ mehtieg biex jgħinu lill-vittmi b'mod effettiv.

*Is-Sinj. Mangion:* Minn din ir-riċerka ħareġ il-bżonn ta' one-stop-shop fejn min qed jesperjenza Vjolenza Domestika jingħata servizz ħolistiku minn pulizija, ħaddiema soċjali etc. taħt saqaf wiehed. Xinhi l-opinjoni tiegħek fuq dan il-kumment?

*Is-Sinj. Barbara:* Naqbel assolutament; il-fatt li vittma trid terġa' tirrakkonta jfisser li mentalment trid terġa' għib li-viżjonijiet u r-rikordji ta` dak li għaddiet minnu. Dan ifisser li hija tkun qed tkabbar il-ferita. Ukoll jekk ikollna dan il-one-stop-shop il-koordinazzjoni bejn il-professjonisti tkun aktar effettiva. Nemmen ukoll li għandna nsibu mezz biex ikun hemm anke tip ta' trasport disponibbli. Eżempju: jekk il-vittma trid tmur tagħmel rapport go għassa u l-għassa għandhom bżonn ċertifikat mediku għandu dejjem jiġi offrut it-trasport.

*Is-Sinj. Mangion:* Kien hemm ukoll min ikkumenta fuq l-aspett ta` misthija li għib magħha l-esperjenza tal-Vjolenza Domestika. Eżempju: persuna li ħadet sehem fl-istudju qalet: "Meta ġara dan kollu, il-familja tiegħi ħarsu lejn dak li kien qed jagħmel hu bħala tal-misthija". X'inhuma l-ħsibijiet tiegħek fuq dan l-aspett?

*Is-Sinj. Barbara:* Fil-verità jekk hawn xi ħadd li għandu jisthi f'din is-sitwazzjoni huwa l-aggressur. F'kazi bħal dawn l-vittma tħossha umiljata u mżebbilha anke li tidher fil-pubbliku. Nemmen ukoll li għalkemm hemm żieda fl-għarfien rigward il-Vjolenza Domestika, bħal per eżempju l-użu ta` billboards fit-toroq li jħajru lil-vittmi jtkellmu fuq il-problema, għandna nsibu mezz biex fl-istess hin nenfasizzaw l-atteġjament inaċċettabbli tal-aggressur. Dan

“

## ... għandna nsibu mezz biex fl-istess hin nenfasizzaw l-atteġjament inaccettabbli tal-aggressur

”

għaliex l-aggressur qed jagħmel hażin u m'hemm xejn li għandu jiġġustifika l-vjolenza.

*Is-Sinj. Mangion:* Żewġ parteċipanti tal-istharrig li għamilt qalu li żewġ modi li jistgħu jintużaw sabiex tieqaf il-Vjolenza Domestika huma taħrig tajjeb għall-ġenituri sabiex irabbu lil uliedom emozzjonalment b'saħħithom u li jrid jintemm għal kollox l-użu tas-swat fuq it-tfal. Xinhi l-opinjoni tiegħek fuq dan?

*Is-Sinj. Barbara:* Bis-swat eċċessiv fuq it tfal xorta m'aħniex nikkontrollaw is-sitwazzjoni jew infehmu lil uliedna jagħrfu bejn it-tajjeb u l-hażin. Anzi l-probabilita` hija li ninnervjawhom u nimlewhom b'rabja li aktar 'il quddiem fil-hajja jistgħu jaslu f'punt illi jiżvugaw din r-rabja miġmhuha tul is-snin fuq haddiehor. Huwa importanti li l-ġenituri jingħataw taħrig fuq t-trobbija tal-ulied. Il-problema hi li illum il-ġurnata kulhadd jaħdem u ftit huma dawk li jsibu hin biex jattendu xi taħrig jew xi laqgħa tal-iskola fuq it-trobbija tal-ulied. Għalhekk huwa importanti li nwasslu l-messaġġi

tagħna lill-ġenituri b'mod aktar effettiv bħal ma huma reklami fuq il-media soċjali u t-televizjoni. Huwa wkoll importanti li l-ġenituri jiġġwidaw lil uliedhom minn meta jkunu żgħar sabiex fil-futur uliedhom ikunu kapaci jgħarfu u jsolvu b'mod effettiv is-sitwazzjonijiet li jiltaqgħu magħhom fil-hajja.

*Is-Sinj. Mangion:* Grazzi Sinj. Barbara talli kont lesta li taqsam magħna l-opinjoni tiegħek rigward dan is-sugġett. Hemm xi kumment ieħor li tixtieq twassal qabel ngħalqu dan id-djalogu?

*Is-Sinj. Barbara:* Iva. L-importanza li nisimgħu u nagħtu għajjnuna lit-tfal tal-vittmi. Għalkemm mhux dejjem milquta direttament dawn xorta waħda jkunu qed ibatu. Meta ngħid tfal irrid infisser anke tfal adulti mhux minuri biss. Għandhom jingħataw iċ-ċans li jibqgħu m'ommhom, irrelevanti l-eta` u li jingħataw għajjnuna professjonali lilhom ukoll.



# WORKSHOP: MEDIA AND MASCULINITY - EFFECTS ON GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

*Chaired by Ms. Amanda Grech, Reported by Ms. Roberta Agius*

*The Media has a very important role to play in the transmission of culture and values. It has enormous power to influence people's perception about almost anything, including Domestic Violence, womanhood, manhood, childhood, violence itself, and so forth. Media generally tends to influence cultural stereotypes including reinforcing traditional stereotypes.*

The current state of the media was discussed particularly that of local media. Participants in the workshop expressed observations about several aspects of reporting in local media.

For example reporters were perceived as tending to confuse things because of their lack of specialization in the area they report in. It was noted how reporters tend to report much more details when a murder's victim is a woman than when it is a man. This definitely leaves an impact on the general perspective of women being victims. This is a dangerous way of reinforcing such stereotypes.

The Media itself need to be educated and informed as it can be critical tool to promote prevention of and awareness on Domestic Violence in its widest sense. It can also compliment the educational efforts being done by agencies and organizations involved in the sector.

It was suggested that names should not be mentioned when reporting on criminal offences. Names are clear identifiers and will eventually leave an impact on both victims and perpetrators who may find rehabilitation more difficult due to social stigma.

The detailed reporting of crime also impacts the elderly and reinforces their sense of vulnerability. When the elderly hear about crimes they tend to fear even walking the streets, for example. The elderly tend to be influenced to the point of a more housebound lifestyle and prefer to lock themselves up at home or move to a residential home, simply to feel 'falsely' safer.

It was pointed out that reporters seem to prefer reporting cases of violence in elderly residences than reporting about how often families abandon their elderly in homes. The latter could be an important point for the media to pick up and use its influence to educate in favour of respect towards the elderly.

The discussions also dealt with the definitions of media and how such definitions have changed over the last years with the widespread use of social media. The distinction between reporters and audience seems to have faded with the advent of social media.

Each social media user is not only an audience and a passive receptor of information but has also become a reporter and a protagonist. The easy access to social media has given the opportunity to all to influence culture and perhaps even change it.

Media should definitely be more conscious about how it is affecting society, particularly children in vulnerable situations. Children's concept and perception of violence is highly influenced by the media. By watching violence either on TV or other means, children, being naturally naive to distinguish between fiction and reality, tend to internalize a dangerous level of violence which they accept as normal. Similarly, adults tend to associate themselves with

violent actors and communicate this to children through games and toys.

Media is also an important conduit to inform the public about social problems, including violence and Domestic Violence, and therefore assist people access services and support needed. By re-visiting its ethos, media can contribute towards a much healthier society and a more balanced one.

It was also acknowledged however, that media is a business and therefore there are certain considerations that are taken when it selects stories to tell and how it tells it. In this regard a code of ethics or policy may go in some way to improve the modus operandi of the media.

Nevertheless, the consensus was that the media should be more aware of its responsibility when handling such situations while fashioning itself to play a central role in influencing attitude against abuse and in favour of equality and respect.

# WORKSHOP: HOW CAN MEN HELP - BEST STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING MEN

*Chaired by Ms. Stephanie Fenech, Reported by Ms. Samantha Pace Gasan*

***The participants in this workshop were mostly women and men's participation was very low. Consequently, the discussion focused mainly on men as perpetrators rather than on men as a resource to engage in this effort to shift culture. It was pointed out that this workshop seemed to reflect faithfully the social construct of violence.***

The major themes emerging from this workshop highlight the acculturation phenomenon. Furthermore, they focus on the challenges envisioned in the attempts to shift the current gendered constructions of manhood and womanhood in particular the link to power, authority and control. Contexts such as the family, education, media and politics were consistently considered as the principal sources of socialization and acculturation of the younger generations.

It has been consistently observed throughout the conference, particularly in this workshop, that men's engagement in abating Domestic

Violence is an essential feature for the successful achievement of an equal society. The notion of empowering men emerged as an important consideration to take when designing policies. Furthermore, an approach that attacks manhood as a construct or as a category would not help men to develop an attitude of equality and instead may tend to reinforce traditional gender role stereotypes.

Instead, women's purposeful contribution based on the circular nature of domestic life and the relevant dynamics between men and women should be emphasized. Some women in the group were of the opinion that women's effort to change was very meager as often gender equality seemed to refer to women's equal access to work and career only. This effort overlooked the necessary power balance that needs to be struck between the genders and the effect this would have on the parties and every individual at home. Inviting and encouraging men to change

rather than attacking them, yields more fruitful balances.

The employment sector and its impact on Domestic Violence and family life in general were mentioned. It has been argued that work boundaries have collapsed through technology and that work is now taken home impacting family time and family life generally and domestic responsibilities in particular, thus increasing the tension between partners.

It has been argued that domestic responsibilities are still an issue in that they are still primarily being carried out by women. This puts further pressure on men and women to parent their children properly and enable future generations to negotiate the appropriate balance. Challenging the current generations on the roles that they should fulfill may not prove to be an easy discussion in spite of all the open discussions and education.

The participation in this workshop voiced itself around various other themes involved in the propagation of Domestic Violence. Some argued about the role of media and violent behavior, and expressed their concern about the younger generations being exposed to violent behavior on TV, computer games, online games, film, songs, and so on in which men are portrayed as violent and women as

submissive recipients of this violence. This has been linked with cultural ideas of violence and universal occurrences and representations of war on news feeds with predominantly male violence connected to power.

Another interesting discussion pursued on what is culturally considered as violence and whether these cultural constructs are discriminatory. For example the idea of violence is very limited to physical violence, which is predominantly masculine.

Some people in the group argue that violence has to have a wider meaning and include other forms of violence, for example emotional violence and intellectual violence, which types are more associated with women generally. This brings in the idea of circular violence in which women and men use different types of violence with men's type being more visible because of its physicality.

This workshop came up with various recommendations varying from the obvious media involvement in generating a healthier culture about gender roles. Some spoke of a cultural shake up that is needed involving the effort of various institutions including the education system and the media. Such interventions are needed at different levels including the community level, the family, individuals

and business, etc. Such collective effort shall address current constructions and narratives of gender roles and relative stereotypes and shall:

- provide support for parents to treat their children equally irrespective of their gender;
- diminish the belief in gender roles and stereotypes through the education system;
- encourage the good use of media;
- introduce campaigns to challenge stereotypes that promote violence and aggression in male dominated spaces such as men's clubs and locker rooms;
- reward men who challenge other men who show disrespect to women in different social contexts;
- empower men to take on roles associated with women, and acknowledge these men. This further promotes a positive wellbeing for men as there are other things in life that give well-being and which due to stereotypes, men are deprived of, such as caring and nurturing for their children.



# A LENS ON THE CONFERENCE



*Mr. Dimitrijevic speaking during the Media & Masculinity workshop.*



*Attendees of the conference during one of the workshops.*



*Workshop on the effective involvement of service users.*

# WORKSHOP: EFFECTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF THE SERVICE USERS

*Chaired by Dr. Cheryl Azzopardi, Reported by Ms. Krista Tabone*

*This workshop commenced by some voicing the need for a safer forum where women could feel free to speak up about Domestic Violence. SOAR were referred to on several occasions as an operational model. The notion of empowerment becomes a very important feature as it denotes self-initiated empowerment coming literally from the source.*

The current professional, political and cultural perspectives of Domestic Violence are dangerous in that they denote and promote helplessness of women. Instead it should be a completely different perceptiveness in relation to Domestic Violence. This position should enable women to create their own journey and make their own decisions rather than leave such decisions to policy makers and administrative leaders. This perspective invites women to enter into dialogue and consultation with service providers and policy makers in order to direct and control the decision making processes in this regard.

This hopefully will result in positioning women at the centre of services and policy making. Such policy should consider reviewing matters such as who leaves the house after abuse and other decisions. It was repeatedly mentioned during this workshop that women should be enabled to make their own decisions and not have the institutions or professions do that for them.

Language and culture barriers also emerged as important to address due to the increasing number of foreigners in Malta and Gozo. This involves for example; explaining what services are available and evaluate to what extent they accommodate the needs of migrant service users. This aspect, like others mentioned above, call for a systemic approach for successfully curbing Domestic Violence.

A further call for a systemic perspective was made by a discourse on the role of the justice system and the structure and procedures of the courts.

Participants agreed that these should be reviewed in view of the present existing anomalies and current trends in psychological well-being of victims and perpetrators of Domestic Violence. For example people are urged to report Domestic Violence only to face harm and inconvenience when going to court. It has been argued that the idiosyncratic nature of experiences call for a diversified and flexible approach, rather than the existing a one-size-fits-all position taken by the legal system.

Current services need to be enriched with further professional participation. For example teams should be trained and professionally expanded to accommodate clients with mental

health issues, such as victims of abuse who attempt suicide. Crisis intervention teams don't always collaborate as they should in this respect and Domestic Violence workers are not professionally equipped to handle such cases. In the same vein, such expansion should include round the clock psychological and psychotherapeutic services for victims.<sup>1</sup> It was indicated that service providers should be more aware of their gender bias and their gendered views of Domestic Violence.

The expansion of the care system to include the community should also comprise employers' contributions into curbing Domestic Violence and deal with ongoing Domestic Violence

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***... encourage women to empower themselves through training and employment while rearing their children simultaneously.***

”

<sup>1</sup> Such psychotherapeutic services should also be made available to perpetrators, who often need help and empowerment to find alternative ways of communication and attachment. Children are also left out of the necessary care needed. This shall also be aimed at prevent the trans-generational transmission of DOMESTIC VIOLENCE in their future relationships.



experience of their employees. For example the increasing number of women on social benefits is a concern that may be a reflection of how women continue to transfer their dependence from their men onto the system.

It was recommended to encourage women to empower themselves through training and employment while rearing their children simultaneously. For this reason the private sector needs to improve its sensitivity to the social issues of their employees and ensure that their HR strategy includes support for women rearing children on their own. Furthermore, women must be encouraged to return to work by providing training in basic skills such as budgeting, health and hygiene, self care and the care of minors.

There was also mention of the role played by the educational system in the collective effort to curb Domestic

Violence. Education was referring to the school system, as well as, to the prison system, legal system and so on. Below are the recommendations that came out of the workshop discussion:

- Research should be conducted amongst service users in order to identify gaps in service users;
- An online confidential forum should be established. This can be used to gather feedback from service users on real issues while offering a peer to peer support;
- Service users and survivors should be consulted directly in the design of policy;
- Domestic Violence victims should have the choice about where to live;
- Service users should have access to information in their native language;

- Court services should be more efficient and victim sensitive;
- Court should ban media from publishing identifiable demographic information;
- Physical structure of court should provide more protection for potential victims of Domestic Violence and for potential perpetuation of Domestic Violence. Lawyers and the judiciary who work with victims of Domestic Violence should be provided with ample training on the psychological aspect of Domestic Violence;
- The existing legislation should be enforced;
- There should be provision of adequate mental health services including psychotherapy and counseling;
- The establishment of Social Enterprise is a necessity;
- Social benefits should be better regulated in order to avoid further abuse in this regard by the perpetrator;
- There should be more protection by the police for the victim;
- There should be more holistic and accessible services;
- There should be training for staff at different levels of intervention while service users should be active partners in the care plan and not passive recipients of services. They shall also be provided with social skills to help them move towards independent living;
- There should be more success stories highlighted in media rather than resorting to pious stories which show survivors as 'victims';
- Psycho-education should be offered to perpetrators;
- There should be more timely services for child victims and witnesses of Domestic Violence.
- Families and friends of service users should be involved in the care plans of both victims and perpetrators.

It is to be noted that this theme, effective involvement of service users, proved to be very challenging for the group to discuss. It was noted that the professionals present were reluctant to speculate on how best to involve the service users as this category of delegates were missing from the discussion.

# WORKSHOP: THE SURVIVORS' JOURNEY TOWARDS INDEPENDENT LIVING

*Chaired by Dr. Charles Cassar, Reported by Ms. Joyce Schembri*

***Participants on this workshop set goals at the outset to guide them through the workshop. Such goals centred mostly on what hinders independent living after being abused and what helps this journey.***

Financial difficulties and psychological difficulties are probably the strongest hindrances holding people back from leaving abusive relationships. What can be helpful is the provision of psychological intervention and social workers' intervention in providing practical care like finding alternative accommodation and encouragement to find work in order to gain an independent living.

Support from shelters and victims' families is needed in order for the victim to be able to find employment. Rent is a major concern due to the high prices. Both financial and practical support can be determinant of independence at this point. Affordable housing or the lack of it, disempower women in particular and this market

situation can compel them to go back to the perpetrator.

Lack of skills to find and retain employment is another barrier to independence. Supporting victims of Domestic Violence to get the skills needed in employment is paramount. Education is important for the women and their children to understand what constitutes violence and abuse at home. Children in families where there is Domestic Violence need to learn as early as possible that their circumstances are not the norm.

The group in this workshop reflected on the adverts presented by Dr. Brenda Murphy during the presentation on media and masculinity. Shocking was the idea for the group that personal values were shaping social values and that people accept such shocking images as the norm without much concern to the subtle messages they portray. Such emotional impact was hard to measure but underpinned certain attitude about women.

Raising awareness on mental health issues and providing the necessary professional intervention is also paramount for independent living. Many victims of Domestic Violence get into learned helplessness and depressive states which disempower them. They would benefit from professional care to overcome such dependence.

The elderly are particularly vulnerable to Domestic Violence as it is evident that the majority of abuse on the elderly occurs in their homes by close relatives. The State should address this issue to prevent further abuse, while community services such as LEAP should give priority to this category

in society. Disabled people were also mentioned as one of the categories that, like the elderly, may face abuse by close relatives.

Participants on this workshop made various recommendations to promote 'individual living'. Such recommendations were namely targeted towards increased awareness and empowerment and more education. Specific recommendations on how this can be achieved include:

- Have empowerment messages on school copy books for children;
- Increasing NGO networking for added value;





- Making mental professionals more accessible in health and LEAP centres within the community;
- Creating TV/radio adverts on help lines for the elderly and the disabled to make it easier for them to report abuse;
- Provide training across the board for all professionals and related public officers;
- Raise awareness about the behaviour of psychopaths and narcissists as a means of prevention for potential victims;
- Involve men in awareness campaigns in order to educate other men that violence is wrong and a crime;
- Introduce extremely harsher fines when conditions are breached because keeping the perpetrator at bay is quite difficult as often the couple shares custody of the children;
- Encourage survivors to share their success stories to help others cut loose from abuse;
- Provide childcare for survivors straight away and not after a two-month time frame;
- Mothers should not require the fathers' signature to take decisions about their children's education and health;
- Survivors should be employed at women's shelters on the basis of their experience even if they do not have academic qualifications;
- The Commissioner on Domestic Violence should investigate the failures of the system to avoid re-victimizing the victim again.

## REFERENCES

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