

Towards a comprehensive system to end violence against women in Vojvodina



Provincial Secretariat for Economy,
Employment and Gender Equality



The United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions
to Eliminate Violence against Women

Towards a comprehensive system to end violence against women in Vojvodina

Experiences in the implementation of the Strategy for Protection from Domestic Violence and Other Forms of Gender-based Violence in AP Vojvodina from 2008 to 2013

Provincial Secretariat for Economy, Employment and Gender Equality

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Preface

In 2013, we mark five years since the adoption of the Strategy for the Protection from Domestic Violence and Other Forms of Gender-based Violence in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina for the period 2008 to 2012. At the time of its adoption, the Strategy represented the first strategic document to address violence against women not only in Vojvodina, but also in Serbia. Thanks to the support of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, we were able to start the implementation of the Strategy immediately after its adoption. Together with our partners, the Autonomous Women's Center, the Social Welfare Center of the City of Sombor, Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization and Victimology Society of Serbia, we have built and are still building a comprehensive system for ending violence against women, a system in which professionals of front-line institutions can provide women with the best possible protection from violence, and women are informed about their rights and types of support they can rely on. The goal we are striving to achieve in Vojvodina, is to establish zero tolerance towards domestic violence, and towards all other forms of gender-based violence, which are considered a violation of human rights. In order to achieve this, we implemented activities in all 45 municipalities in Vojvodina, we organized over 200 trainings reaching approximately 3000 professionals from social welfare centers, police, courts, prosecutor's offices, health care centers, schools, women's organizations. We implemented campaigns in

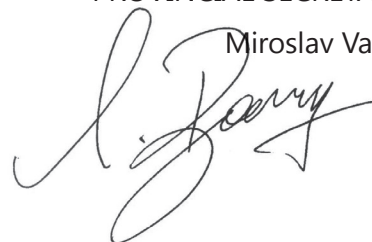
order to change patriarchal attitudes and widespread stereotypes that still justify men's violence against women. We also worked with young women and men throughout Vojvodina in order to prevent violence from happening in the future. Research was conducted to gain a better insight into the specificities of violence against women in Vojvodina so we could plan our activities based on reliable data and concrete needs of women in Vojvodina. From the very start, we worked on the networking of institutions, because we believe that only such a comprehensive system can adequately address the fact that every third woman in Vojvodina has experienced physical violence and every other woman has been exposed to psychological violence.

Five years of implementing activities is enough time to consider the effects of our work, but, in the case of violence against women, is unfortunately not long enough to solve the problem. The fact that 11 women were killed by their partners in Vojvodina in 2012, reminds us that our work is far from done.

This publication is an attempt to summarize the results of activities we implemented and lessons learnt in our fight against violence. These experiences represent the basis for our further work in this field, starting with the development of a new provincial Strategy. We hope that after its implementation we will be one step closer to our goal: stopping violence against women.

PROVINCIAL SECRETARY

Miroslav Vasin



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1. STRATEGY FOR THE PROTECTION FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND OTHER FORMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Members of the Assembly of AP Vojvodina unanimously adopted the Strategy for the Protection from Domestic Violence and Other Forms of Gender-based Violence in AP Vojvodina for the period 2008 to 2012, on September 23, 2008. At that time, the Strategy represented the first strategic document in Serbia addressing the prevention of and protection from violence in partner relationships.

Thanks to the support of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, the Strategy was implemented in all municipalities in Vojvodina during the period from 2009 to 2013.

NEEDS FOR THE STRATEGY'S DEVELOPMENT

Irrespective of the fact that the Government of AP Vojvodina had been pursuing the policy based on the principles of the respect and protection of human rights, institutional mechanisms and systematic measures of protection from domestic violence and violence against women, providing equal protection to all women, were not developed. The key challenges affecting appropriate and efficient response to violence were as follows:

- Lack of established procedures of action, poor cooperation among institutions and lack of obligatory exchange of information.
 - Underdeveloped practice of systematic data collection and analysis concerning the prevalence of violence in partner relationships, characteristics of survivors and offenders and the quality of services for protection against violence.
 - Soft penal policy and tolerance towards domestic violence.
- Over 70% of professionals working in teams for the elimination of violence against women did not receive any specialized training, nor did they receive any knowledge on domestic violence during their formal education.
 - Information on accessibility of available services and on measures for ensuring protection from domestic violence did not exist in all municipalities and in all languages in official use in AP Vojvodina.
- Public awareness raising concerning violence against women did not continue throughout the year.
- Specialized services for the support of women survivors of violence, such as help-lines and shelters existed only in several municipalities. Women's organizations and help-lines for supporting women survivors of violence were forced to stop work due to lack of financial support.



LONG-TERM GOAL OF THE STRATEGY

In the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, zero tolerance of domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence, treated as violation of the fundamental human rights, has been established. The system of preventive measures has been developed, and a comprehensive, specific, efficient and effective system of preventive measures has been established at the municipal and provincial level, based on multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral cooperation and implemented by educated male and female experts in all relevant services. An integrated system of recording and documenting has been established, as well as the system of monitoring, analyzing, surveying and reporting of all competent services on domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence, based on non-discrimination and compliance with the standards of personal data protection.

GOALS AND MEASURES THE STRATEGY FOCUSES ON:

- Creating efficient institutional and multi-sector response to cases of domestic violence.
 - Establishing a universal system of keeping records and documenting cases of violence in partner relationships.
- Improving individual and specialized services for the support of survivors of violence, such as counseling and psychological, health and legal support.
- Strengthening the trust of women survivors of violence in institutions and encouraging women to report violence.
- Implementing prevention activities and creating an environment that condemns violence and supports survivors of violence.

2. THE PROJECT “Towards a comprehensive system to end violence against women in Vojvodina”

In order to ensure the full and continuous implementation of the Strategy for the Protection from Domestic Violence and Other Forms of Gender-based Violence in AP Vojvodina, the Provincial Secretariat for Economy, Employment and Gender Equality applied for funds within the global open call for projects of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund). The Secretariat's project was one of the 28 projects that were approved of the 1068 concept notes submitted. The amount of the UN Trust Fund grant was 990.970 USD, and the period of implementation was from 2009 to 2012.

The support of the UN Trust Fund and funds from the budget of the AP Vojvodina enabled the implementation of activities defined in the Strategy in all 45 municipalities of Vojvodina, almost immediately after the Strategy's adoption, through the project titled *Towards a comprehensive system to end violence against women in Vojvodina*.

Activities focusing on capacity building of professionals for work in the field of elimination of domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence, as well as on raising women's awareness and public awareness about the characteristics of domestic violence and measures for prevention and support to survivors, represent the backbone of the project *Towards a comprehensive system to end violence against women in Vojvodina*.

The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund) is a testimony to the global consciousness that violence against women and girls is neither inevitable nor acceptable. UN Trust Fund is a leading global grant-making mechanism exclusively dedicated to addressing violence against women and girls in all its forms. It supports effective initiatives that demonstrate that violence against women and girls can be systematically addressed, reduced and, with persistence, eliminated. The UN Trust Fund was established by the UN General Assembly in 1996 and is administered by UN Women on behalf of the UN system. To date, UN Trust Fund has delivered more than USD 86 million to 351 initiatives in 128 countries and territories. The UN Trust Fund works with non-governmental organizations, governments and UN country teams to prevent violence against women and girls, expand the access of women and girls survivors of violence to services and strengthen the implementation of laws, policies and action plans on violence against women and girls. The UN Trust Fund grants are awarded annually through an open, transparent process that ensures quality programming and rigor in the selection of grantees (based on <http://www.unwomen.org/how-we-work/un-trust-fund/>).

PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

- Women and girls in general, but also women from rural areas, refugee and internally displaced women, adolescent girls, and

women from vulnerable groups, such as Roma women, women living in poverty, women with disabilities.

- Social workers, health care workers, police officers, judges, public prosecutors, helpline volunteers, students, civil servants, assembly members, journalists, activists of non-governmental organizations.

WHAT WE STRIVED TO ACHIEVE

- Professionals in all relevant institutions and organizations in at least 30% of municipalities in AP Vojvodina deliver effective, efficient and coordinated measures to prevent gender-based violence by the end of 2012;
- 30% increase in the number of women survivors of violence (including women from vulnerable groups) who use services in 45 municipalities in AP Vojvodina by the end of 2012.

What survivors expect from competent institutions is their greater engagement, understanding of the problem and survivors' needs, provision of support, assistance, protection and information.

PARTNERSHIPS

Key Partners

During the implementation of project activities, the Provincial Secretariat for Economy, Employment and Gender Equality relied on the experience, competence and capacities of partner organizations, which have established good practices during the course of their long-year work in the field of the elimination of violence in partner relationships and human rights. Key partners in project elimination were the following organizations and institutions: Autonomous Women's Center (AWC),

Social Welfare Center of the City of Sombor (SWC Sombor), Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization (EHO) and Victimology Society of Serbia (VDS).

- **The Autonomous Women's Center** is a non-governmental organization established in 1993. Its work is based on feminist principles and theory and on the belief that life without violence is a basic human right. AWC implements prevention and informative-education activities for women and the general public, consultations with women survivors of men's violence, interventions in situations of crisis, provides psychological support for overcoming trauma from violence, as well as legal support, psychological support through their help-line, legal information and consultations, informing in the field of social welfare, information about other sources of support and services in the community, independent representation of beneficiaries in institutions and in courts and in administrative proceedings. The organization also provides training for representatives of non-governmental organizations and institutions, prevention activities for and education of youth. It is also involved in public advocacy and analytical-research activities, as well as independent monitoring and evaluation of institutional action, as well as monitoring of the situation concerning domestic violence and status of the human rights of women (shadow reporting).

- **The Social Welfare Center of the City of Sombor**, together with the Sombor police, has developed the so-called Sombor model of inter-sectoral cooperation, involving the close cooperation between social workers and police at local level. The Center has extensive experience in providing support and protection for survivors of violence at local level, processing cases of violence and networking of institutions for the solution of cases of domestic violence. The Sombor Social Welfare Center

received the Annual Gender Equality Award of the Government of AP Vojvodina in 2005.

→ **The Victimology Society of Vojvodina is a non-governmental organization established in 1997**, with extensive experience in analysis, research and training in the field of legislation, legal procedures, services and procedures for protection of victims, as well as experience in education on domestic violence and trafficking in women. In 2002, this organization conducted the first research in Serbia on the prevalence of violence against women.

→ **The Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization** is a humanitarian, non-profit organization established in 1993, actively involved in building a cohesive civil society in Serbia, through the implementation of: eradication of poverty, promotion of human rights and development of inter-church cooperation. EHO has excellent experience in work with vulnerable groups, such as the Roma community, persons with disabilities, elderly people, refugees and internally displaced persons.

LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

Upon the Strategy's adoption, and with a view of its effective implementation, the Provincial Secretariat for Economy, Employment and Gender Equality started an initiative to ensure support for the implementation of activities addressing the elimination of violence against women at local level. Presidents of 30 municipalities in Vojvodina signed a Letter of Commitment in 2009, expressing the readiness of their local self-government to participate in the creation of a general legal and political framework in Vojvodina in which there is zero tolerance towards domestic violence, and readiness to participate in the implementation of measures envisaged in the Strategy.

In 2009, the project cooperated with 18 municipalities: Backa Topola, Coka, Indjija,

Irig, Kanjiza, Kikinda, Mali Idjos, Nova Crnja, Novi Knezevac, Pecinci, Ruma, Senta, Sremska Mitrovica, Stara Pazova, Subotica, Sid, Vrbas, Zitiste.

In 2010, another 14 municipalities participated in the project: Sombor, Kula, Apatin, Odzaci, Vrsac, Plandiste, Bela Crkva, Novi Becej, Kovacica, Opovo, Alibunar, Pancevo, Kovin, Secanj.

In 2011, project activities were implemented in 13 municipalities: Srbobran, Temerin, Ada, Zabalj, Titel, Becej, Bac, Zrenjanin, Novi Sad, Beocin, Sremski Karlovci, Backa Palanka and Backi Petrovac, with which the cycle of implementing project activities in all municipalities of Vojvodina was completed.

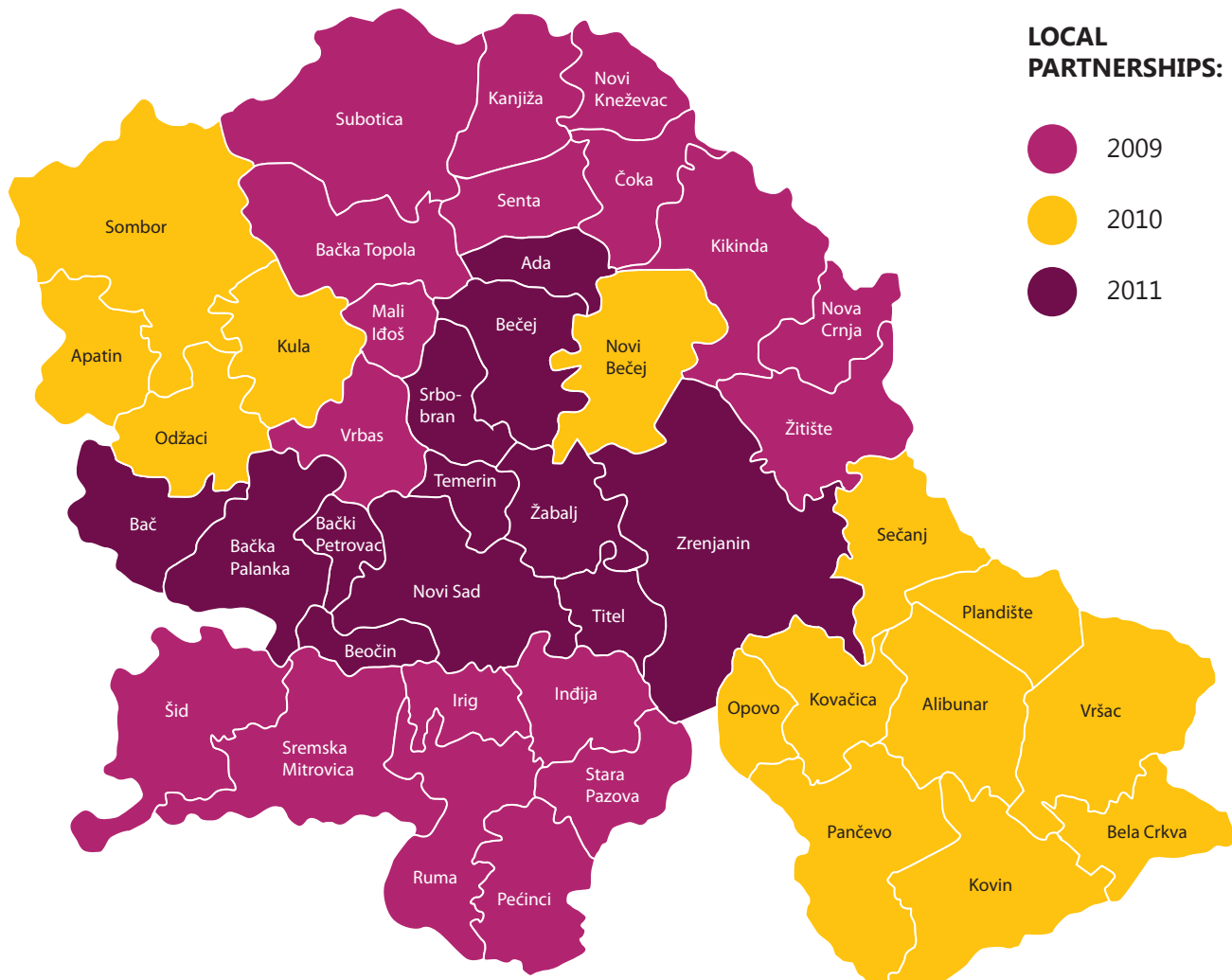
PRINCIPLES

Our guiding principles during project implementation were based on the principles of the Strategy:

- the safety of the victim is a priority in actions taken by services, institutions and authorities;
- the offender is the sole bearer of responsibility for the violent behavior;
 - the priority of all interventions is to stop violence, and then ensure other measures of support and assistance;
- the urgency of procedures is determined based on a situation risk assessment and assessment of threat to the victim(s);
 - what needs to be considered in any intervention is the inequality of power between the violence victim and offender, including the selection of different procedures and treatment;
 - services, institutions and authorities are responsible for stopping the violence and undertaking measures to protect all victims.

Activities

- Education of professionals at local level on institutional protection and inter-institutional cooperation for a more efficient prevention of and protection from domestic violence and violence in partner relations,
- Specialized trainings for professionals in social welfare centers, health care workers, judges, prosecutors, representatives of all institutions in municipalities,
 - Training on initiating legal proceedings for lawyers at social welfare centers,
- Exchange of experience and good practices among municipalities,
- Research on the prevalence of domestic violence in Vojvodina,
- Research on the practice of courts in the field of gender-based violence in Vojvodina, based on the analysis of 303 court cases and 303 public prosecutor cases,
- Peer education in Vojvodina's secondary schools,
- Establishing a universal system for keeping records on reported cases of domestic violence and data exchange among institutions,
- Initiative for the establishment of a universal helpline for survivors of violence against women in Vojvodina and establishment of the Network of Help-lines for Women Survivors of Violence in Vojvodina.



3. FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN VOJVODINA

Results of the research, conducted as part of the project in 2009 by the Victimology Society of Serbia, indicate a high level of prevalence of domestic violence in Vojvodina. Over half of the women interviewed stated that they had been victims of some form of violence. Psychological violence is the most frequent form of violence, suffered by almost every second woman (49,8% of interviewees). A little less than a third of women interviewed (27,3%) had received threats of physical violence, while 33,9% of interviewees had been victims of physical violence. Over 18% (18,6%) of interviewed women were victims of stalking and 9,1% of them were victims of sexual violence. In

"He beat me for breakfast, lunch and dinner, sometimes even more often. Sometimes I think he used me as his boxing bag."

the recorded cases of domestic violence, the present or former husband of the interviewee was most frequently the offender.

→ In 34% of threats with physical violence, threats were made to the victim's life, and the most frequent form of physical violence is slapping.

This form of violence is especially serious because it often has acute consequences in the form of physical injury, but also in the form of chronic psychosomatic disorders or traumatic experiences.

→ A little over 8% of women participating in the research have experienced threats by weapons, while in 6,2% of cases they suffered attacks with use of weapons.



- Psychological violence 49.8%
- Physical violence 33.9%
- Threats of physical violence 27.3%
- Sexual violence 18.6%
- Stalking 9.1%

Prevalence of Different Forms of Violence

- Of threats by weapons, most threats are threats by knife and firearms (in 37.2% of cases), and most attacks involve use of household items.

„He beat me relentlessly, I think it went on forever. If the neighbors hadn't called the police I think he would have killed me.“

- The most frequent forms of stalking (32.2% of cases) are calling victims on the telephone to monitor movement and activities, blackmail, insults and persistent requests.
- Coerced sex is the most frequent form of sexual violence (59.6% of cases).
- The research reconfirmed the hidden nature of and reluctance to talk about sexual violence, so it is certain that the real percentages are higher than those shown.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WAS MOST FREQUENTLY REPEATED OVER TEN TIMES

- Besides physical injuries, interviewees also suffered psychological and psychosomatic consequences, such as: fears (50,3%), depression (42%), insomnia (41,4%), low self-esteem (40,3%), isolation (30,4%), psychological and physical illness – in 19,9% of women, as well as other negative emotions – 6,1% of women.
- There are no significant differences concerning this phenomenon between urban and rural communities.
- Most women who had suffered physical and/or sexual violence, thought about leaving the offender, tried to or left the offender for good, but the share of those who left the offender is still very low.
- Reasons for staying with the offender that were most frequently listed include existential problems, hope that the violence will stop, fear that leaving might have a negative effect on the children, absence of support and assistance

of family and friends and fear of revenge by the offender.

SOCIAL RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE

→ Domestic violence was reported to the police in 23,2% of cases. This is below the reporting rate of other criminal offences and confirms the well-known fact that domestic violence is characterized by a high hidden number.

- Women's readiness to report domestic violence to the police is especially affected by their economic independence, as well as the type and severity of the violence. The decision to report a violent incident to the police is made most easily by women who consider themselves the breadwinners of the family and those who are employed.

- Women more frequently decide to report physical violence, especially if it is accompanied by psychological and/or sexual

violence, and in situations where the injury. Women are more reluctant to report sexual violence to the police when it is not accompanied with physical attacks.

- This confirms the still dominant patriarchal model of socialization, due to which sexual violence in the family is either not perceived as a form of violence or women decide not to report it or seek help because of shame. However, there is a significant number of survivors of domestic violence who list distrust in the work of the police, their inefficiency and lack of interest to react in these cases as reasons for not reporting violence.

„My ex-husband used wires to tie me to a pole in the yard. I was only in my underwear and it was winter. He beat me with a rolling pin and I received serious physical injuries.“

- The share of 18.2% of survivors of domestic violence who turned to a social welfare center for help, is still very low, especially bearing in mind that a great number of interviewees recognize social welfare centers as a source of assistance in cases of violence. This is still an increase compared to the results of the research conducted in 2001, when this share was 9,6%.
- This could be the consequence of an increase of services provided by social welfare centers concerning domestic violence, especially the introduction of mobile teams specialized for work with survivors of domestic violence, on-call duty, counseling services and help-lines for survivors of domestic violence in some social welfare centers.

What is worrying is the high level of dissatisfaction with the work of state bodies and institutions, especially the police and social welfare centers. The source of dissatisfaction identified, is the attitude of representatives of relevant state services towards survivors, such as belittling, underestimation, blaming the victim, inertia, lack of interest in and understanding of the problem and lack of empathy. In addition to this, research results indicate a lack of a supportive attitude in health care workers, even in cases where victims were generally satisfied with how they were treated.

A supportive attitude, professionalism, listening to survivors and appropriate informing are the main qualities of professionals that were listed by interviewees who were satisfied with the response of state services.

- A significant share of interviewees is informed about the existence of non-governmental organizations and think their work is important, but that the number of such organizations is disproportionate to the needs of survivors.
- The research on domestic violence in Vojvodina indicates a high level of the recognition of domestic violence as a form of criminal

There is a great number of interviewees who believe that the state should do something to combat domestic violence. Most interviewees suggested the tightening up of repressive reaction by the state, but they also stressed the importance of prevention measures, measures concerning assistance for and support of survivors and non-repressive measures towards offenders.

activity and of the legal regulations addressing domestic violence. However, the level of information on measures for protection against violence is still low, which further stresses the need to continue awareness raising activities aimed at women, especially in rural areas, where the level of women's awareness about the existence of non-governmental organizations providing support in cases of violence and about relevant legal regulations, is at a significantly lower level than in cities.

RESPONSE OF THE CRIMINAL-JUSTICE SYSTEM TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE - JUDICIAL PRACTICE IN VOJVODINA

During 2010 and 2011, Prof Sladjana Jovanovic LLD, associate Prof Biljana Simeunovic Pantic LLD and Vanja Macanovic conducted a research on the procedures of public prosecutor's offices and courts in Vojvodina in criminal-justice proceedings for the act of domestic violence. The research was conducted in order to identify problems concerning the legal qualification of the act and implementation of very proceedings, as well as the effects of recent changes of the criminal law.

The aim of the research was to gain insight into the phenomenological dimension of violence, as well as its etiological factors and present a relevant criminological and victimological image of this phenomenon, to determine the number of cases in basic and higher courts in Vojvodina in the previous two years, as well as the solution of these cases.

WHO ARE THE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE?

- Women dominate among victims (84,5%).
- The average age of victims is between 33 and 48 (35%).
- Most of them were born and work in a city, and have secondary-level education.
- At the time of the crime 39% of them were married.
- Victims with one or two children dominate.
- In 70% of cases there was prior abuse by the offender, most often in the form of physical violence.
- Only 1/6 of them asked for help from a social welfare center, non-governmental organization, physician or psychologist.

PROFILE OF OFFENDERS

- Men dominate among those sentenced (94%).
- The average age of offenders is between 33 and 48, with secondary-level education.
 - They are employed in 42% of cases, though the share of unemployed offenders is also significant (40%).
 - About 50% of offenders live in a city, most of them are married or in a partner relationship, have one or two children, and come from complete primary families.
 - Most of them have no prior sentences (60%) and are legally sane (57%).
- About half of them (52%) were under the influence of alcohol at the time of the crime, and a relatively high number of them suffer from alcoholism (39%).
- Most offenders do not admit the criminal offence, do not feel guilty or show remorse for the perpetrated crime.
 - Criminal charges are most frequently made by the police (65%) or the plaintiff (34%).
 - In the majority of cases the prosecutor did not hear either the plaintiff or the person against whom charges were made (79,5%).
- Criminal charges were rejected in 66,7% of cases, mostly due to insufficient evidence. The majority of rejected cases

are those involving partner violence. Rejection of criminal charges is evident in cases when the victims does not fit the model of the „ideal victim“ (when the victim fights back, i.e. in the case of reactive violence)

- Though the criminal report was submitted within several days, the time for indictment submission was 6 months (51%) or between 6 and 12 months (39,6%).
 - A court decision was most frequently made within 6 to 12 months from submission of the criminal report.
- In 20,5% of cases the victims used their right not to testify.
- The new procedural measure of court orders to stay away from specific persons, with or without electronic supervision, was not used by courts at all, while the measure of temporary removal from the courtroom while the victim is testifying, was used in one case.
 - Among court decisions, suspended sentences dominate (74,3%), above all probation.
 - Every fifth offender was sentenced.
 - Extenuating circumstances were found in 90,1% of cases, among which the dominant ones are no prior sentences (23,7%) and parenthood (21,4%).

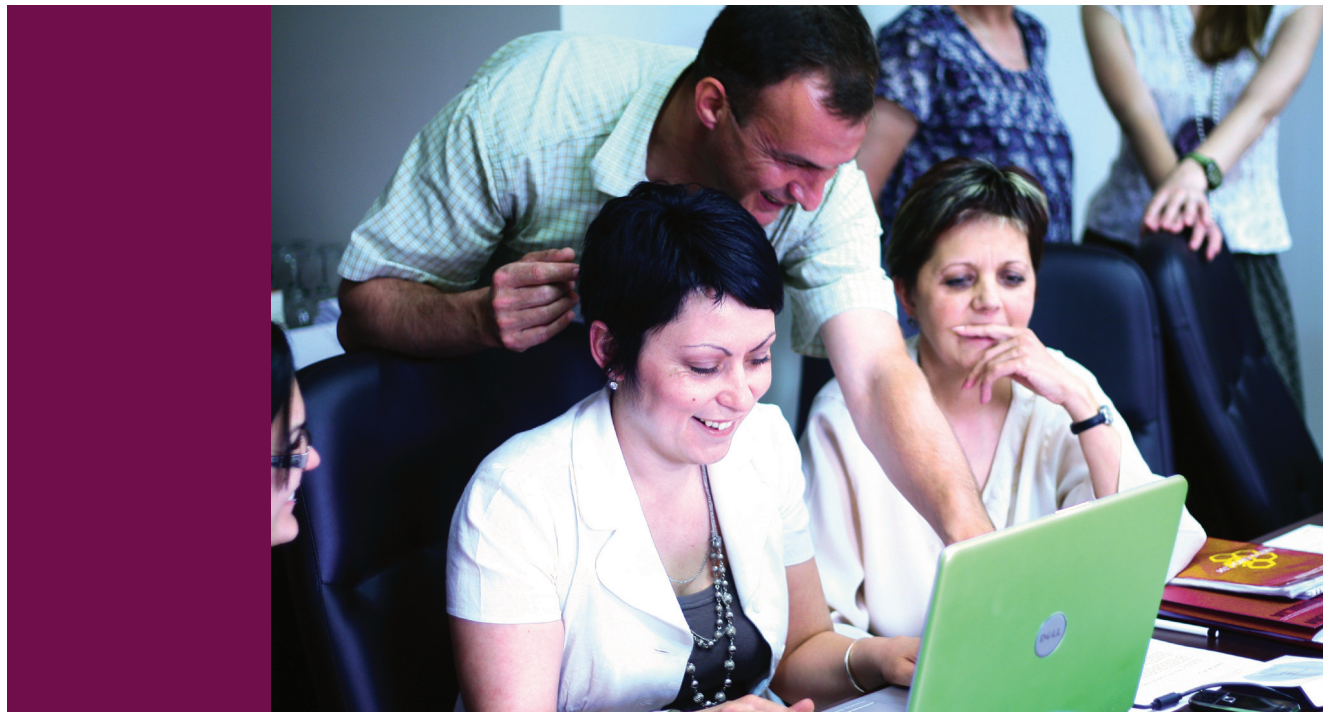
FEMICIDE IN VOJVODINA

- A total of 11 women were killed in a domestic - partner relationship context in Vojvodina, from January 1 to December 31, 2012. These data are based on media reports analyzed by the Women against Violence Network.
- All women who were killed knew the perpetrator; of those, 5 women were killed by their partner and 3 by their husband. One woman was killed by her father, one by her son and one by her grandson.
- Four women were killed with a knife, three with a gun, and two women were beaten to death. Two women were killed in other ways¹.
- Seven murders were committed in a house/apartment with a shared ownership, two in the woman's house/apartment. One murder was committed in the perpetrator's house/apartment. One woman was murdered in her shop.
- One woman was in the age category from 18 to 25, one woman was in the age category over 65, two women were between 26 and 35 years of age, two women were aged between 36 and 45 and two women were aged between 46 and 55. Three women were in the age category from 56 to 65. A total of eleven people were left without a mother, 6 of these are underage children.
- Four women had reported violence prior to their murder. In the 3 cases where the perpetrator was in possession of firearms, it is unknown whether violence had been reported prior to the murder.

(Women against Violence Network – www.zeneprotivnasilja.org)

¹ In the case of one woman, the circumstances leading to her death are unclear, but it is assumed she was beaten to death. The other woman was killed with a concrete block.

4. BUILDING INSTITUTIONS' CAPACITIES



A high prevalence of violence against women in Vojvodina and the insufficient capacities of institutions, were key elements of the context in which we started establishing a system for efficient protection from violence. This is why improving the capacities of professionals for work in the field of the solution of domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence, represented the backbone of the project *Towards a comprehensive system to end violence against women in Vojvodina*.

The Provincial Secretariat for Economy, Employment and Gender Equality implemented activities on the entire territory of AP Vojvodina with the aim of increasing professionals' specific knowledge on the protection from domestic violence, in the form of a series of basic and specialized workshops and expert meetings.

Basic training encompassed a set of several workshops focusing on the following topics:

- **Domestic violence and institutional protection**
- **Organization of case conferences for protection from domestic violence**
- **Coordinated community response in the prevention of and protection from domestic violence**

Participants of basic trainings had the opportunity to learn about basic concepts and principles of protection from domestic violence and procedures of identification, confirmation and risk assessment

of domestic violence. In addition to this, professionals improved their knowledge on intervention planning, monitoring and assessing effects, as well as recording and documenting cases of violence. Moreover, professionals learnt about the significance of organizing case conferences, pre-conditions for organization, implementation and results of case conferences and coordinated response.

"See, I told this woman that even if she changed her mind, if she wanted to give up the whole procedure, if she came to court and said she didn't want the measures, and if she came to me again, I would still see her and talk to her as if she were reporting it for the first time. And it just so happened that this woman gave up, and came back for the second time...so... we didn't lose her in the system, she had trust in us and didn't come back with fear. This shows that my colleagues' attitudes changed". - employee of a social welfare center

In order to further improve the networking of competent institutions and organizations in the local community, basic trainings were attended by **representatives of social welfare centers, police, health care institutions, prosecutor's offices, courts (criminal, civil, magistrates'), local self-governments, education institutions and local organizations dealing with protection from domestic violence or representing interests of**

"It's much clearer how we should approach different people, when it is appropriate to talk and what limits to set, concrete things. And the training on how to work with offenders, how to talk to them, how to set limits, the approach with them has to be different than with the victim..." - employee of a social welfare center

vulnerable groups of women (Roma women, women with disabilities, women from rural areas, women refugees and internally displaced women).

Implementation of workshops began in February 2009 and by the end of 2011 they had been organized in all 45 municipalities of AP Vojvodina. The workshops were implemented according to the program of the Autonomous Women's Center, accredited at the competent ministry. In this way, representatives of social welfare centers who participated in workshops could receive their license necessary for work. Data on training participants were forwarded to the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (for employees of social welfare centers) and to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (for representatives of the police). All participants received certificates of completed training.

Specialized workshops and expert meetings for professionals from specific fields were an integral part of training.

In order to ensure better access to justice and legal aid for survivors of domestic violence, we organized **trainings for lawyers of social welfare centers and for local services for free legal aid**. The aim of the training was to provide new information and improve existing knowledge on providing legal aid and initiating legal proceedings in cases of domestic violence. In addition to this, we organized expert meetings for judges of basic and higher courts, prosecutors, as well as lawyers at social welfare centers, to discuss the possibilities and obstacles in the system of criminal-law protection and family-law protection from domestic violence.

NUMBER OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

→ 1261 professionals from 45 municipalities in Vojvodina attended the training on domestic violence and institutional protection



- 1045 professionals from 45 municipalities in Vojvodina attended the training on organization of case conferences for protection from domestic violence
 - 999 professionals were trained to implement coordinated community actions to prevent and protect from domestic violence
 - 196 case leaders from all social welfare centers in Vojvodina have knowledge on how to work with women survivors of domestic violence
 - 182 judges and prosecutors attended expert meetings on family-law protection from domestic violence
 - 170 health care workers received knowledge on the health consequences of violence in partner relationships
 - 152 judges and prosecutors attended expert meetings on criminal-law protection from domestic violence
 - 107 police officers have received information about standards of police procedures in cases of domestic violence
 - 83 lawyers from all social welfare centers in Vojvodina have been trained to initiate legal proceedings in cases of domestic violence
 - 62 judges of magistrates' courts have been informed about domestic violence in the practice of magistrates' courts.
- In order to ensure better access of survivors of violence to health care, psychological and social services, **specialized workshops were implemented for psychologists and social workers at social welfare centers on counseling and therapeutic work with survivors of violence.** A total of 10 such workshops were organized,

attended by 196 employees of social welfare centers.

A special segment of the workshop was dedicated to techniques for overcoming stress for employees of social welfare centers working on domestic violence and gender-based violence cases. In addition to this, in order to empower employees of social welfare centers in their approach towards offenders, one **workshop was organized that focused on social interventions towards domestic violence offenders**. This workshop was attended by 121 employees of social welfare centers from the territory of AP Vojvodina.

Specialized training was also organized for employees of health care centers from all municipalities in Vojvodina, **on recognizing early signs of domestic violence** and further steps, performing medical and/or medical/forensic examinations and issuing medical documentation, as well as on informing on further procedures in solving cases of violence. From 2009 to 2011, a total of nine such specialized workshops were organized, attended by 186 health care workers.

"Now I have a different approach, I ask her what she would do, what she would recommend, so that we could see how realistic all options are... the course of the interview, the language used – the education helped". - health care worker

Though not initially envisaged, during the course of the project we also organized **special workshops about police procedures in cases of domestic violence**, based on requests of the very representatives of the police.

A database of the capacities of competent institutions in the field of protection from domestic violence in each municipality,

"There is no special room for survivors of violence in police stations, the survivor sits on a bench in the hall...We need a separate room for this, so that the survivor doesn't feel ashamed." - police officer

"The quality is satisfactory, but the quantity is insufficient. There should always be one man on patrol who completed the training..." - police officer

"We need more education, it should be continuous and constant, what has been done so far is great, but it's not enough." - police officer

of the number of implemented trainings, number of profile of professionals was created within the project. The database is available in electronic form and can be accessed at the following website: <http://www.hocudaznas.org/uceniciProjekta.php>.

MULTI-SECTORAL COOPERATION

The creation of an efficient and multi-sectoral response to domestic violence was one of the goals of both the project and the Strategy. Besides the provision of basic and specialized training, the Secretariat, through cooperation with local-level institutions, also supported the development of local protocols of procedure in cases of domestic violence, based on existing positive practices in AP Vojvodina.

The innovative practice of institutional cooperation established in Sombor, that contributed to the more efficient solution of cases of domestic violence and increasing the trust of survivors in institutions, was widely presented with the aim to encourage the application of this model in other local communities.

After the implementation of workshops, a framework for monitoring coordinated actions was developed, and in the period from 2009 to 2012, meetings were organized for good practice and experience exchange among municipalities.

In the period from 2009 to 2012 a total of 226 workshops were organized, attended by 2888 professionals (2001 women and 887 men) from 45 municipalities. There were 761 lawyers and police officers and 755 employees from social welfare centers and health care institutions. Workshops on domestic violence were attended by 231 school staff.

„Improvement was achieved in the solution of cases of violence against women, because representatives of courts issued concrete orders for the solution of concrete cases of domestic violence. What is also important for our procedures, is that all relevant institutions that can affect the solution of the issue of violence were present during trainings. We learnt about all those who participate in the solution of cases of violence and what the steps are for successful response in concrete cases.”

„We still need activities at the level of violence prevention, coordinated response of institutions exists, but more often in cases when the violence has already occurred, when an intervention is needed.”

„The very project was the trigger to even start thinking about this negative phenomenon in the municipality of Senta. All professionals from all fields that have to do with this issue were trained. Coordination among specific institutions was achieved (police, prosecutor's office, social welfare center, schools, health care center).”

The significance of coordinated institutional response in combating domestic violence, was recognized at national level as well. The Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the General Protocol on Procedures and Cooperation of Institutions, Agencies and Organizations in Situations of Domestic and Partner Relationship Violence against



Women in 2011. The Protocol envisages that special protocols for participants in its implementation be developed within 12 months of its adoption, as well as the encouragement of the development of protocols at local level. Through expert meetings in each municipality, we supported cooperation between institutions and organizations at local level, and encouraged the organization of case conferences and coordinated actions against violence.

THE SOMBOR MODEL

We began working on cases of domestic violence in 2002. The basis of our work was to create conditions for survivors of violence to be protected from the inefficiency and lack of cooperation between institutions and establish zero tolerance of domestic violence. At the time, domestic violence was not defined as a criminal act and family-law protection did not exist. Institutions didn't recognize violence as a problem. It was reported exclusively to the police, that recorded it as disturbance of public peace and mainly issued warnings, while in offence proceedings perpetrators were given warnings or had to pay minor fines. In 2002, the police recorded 217 cases of domestic violence, while the social welfare center only managed to record 5 potential cases. Our aim was to encourage people to report violence, to show that it was worth reporting violence and to achieve zero tolerance to violence. We realized that institutions were isolated, they had a partial approach towards violence, they were losing their authority and were truly inefficient, which gave the offender the opportunity to control the system and the victim. We came to the idea that the only response to violence is information exchange and a synchronized, joint reaction to domestic violence.

We decided to develop a model based on the daily exchange of information between the **police and social welfare center** on each reported case of domestic violence and on respect of the principle of urgency through jointly planned interventions. This was a confusing novelty to the system, so the Sombor Police Directorate forwarded this request to the Ministry of Internal Affairs for approval, and after six months, for the first time in the entire country and in the region, approval was granted for the exchange of information at local level.

During the ten years of the model's application, a joint, on-line database of the police and social welfare center was created (in 2005), which enables the exchange of information on circumstances relevant for the prevention of domestic violence, monitoring recidivism, thus making domestic violence visible.

Thanks to the efficiency of the protection model, **survivors gained trust in institutions**, the number of reported cases of all forms of violence is rising constantly. Institutions have been transformed according to the needs of survivors of violence, and have developed their capacities for reform. At one point in the process of the regaining of trust in institutions, the center and police reached a maximum number of reports – 732 reported cases of domestic violence for a population of 90.000.

Our **"mobile teams"** (formed in 2003) for cases of domestic violence (defined in the law as urgent interventions), have become a regular practice in most social welfare centers in Serbia, and have been defined as an obligation in the Law on Social Protection that became effective in April 2011. The current Urgent Interventions Team (formed based on a special protocol on the prevention of domestic violence) ensures the availability of social protection services 24 hours a day, not only for survivors of violence, but for all citizens in crisis, and its activities are focused on the provision of urgent interventions for protection and care.



The experiences of “the Sombor model” have been incorporated into the Strategy for the Protection from Domestic Violence and Other Forms of Gender-based Violence in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. This model has also shown good results in other countries of the region where it was promoted and accepted by local communities.

The Sombor Social Welfare Center is a partner institution in the project “Towards a comprehensive system to end violence against women in Vojvodina”, and during the previous three years, we promoted the work of the police, prosecutor’s office, health care center and social welfare center in all municipalities of Vojvodina, with the aim of showing that it is indeed possible to implement such a model in the community. At present, all institutions in the system in our city are perfectly networked, we respond promptly and efficiently, we have synchronized procedures, so that all institutional channels are open. We also achieved the goal that the response of institutions no longer depends on individuals, local teams, enthusiasm or awareness about violence.

In our city’s system of protection there is also a shelter for women and children survivors of domestic violence, constructed with the support of the **City of Sombor, the B92 Foundation, the Sombor Social Welfare Center** and Government of AP Vojvodina – Provincial Secretariat for Economy, Employment and Gender Equality. Soon after its construction, a memorandum of understanding was signed with the Municipality of Apatin **on the funding of one host at the shelter**, thus ensuring the regional nature of the shelter, both at the functional, as well as the formal level.

Silvija Kranjc, Director of the Social Welfare Center of the City of Sombor

5. ESTABLISHING A UNIVERSAL SYSTEM OF RECORDS

The effectiveness of a multi-sectoral response to domestic violence is affected by the lack of a universal system of keeping records of reported cases of violence and lack of data exchange among institutions. A research on practices, services and capacities in the field of preventing violence in partner relationships, as well as on practices of keeping special records and documentation on survivors of domestic violence who turn to institutions for help, conducted by the Victimology Society of Serbia within the project, revealed the following:

- In the Republic of Serbia, it is impossible to say precisely and in a documented way, what the prevalence of domestic violence is, or who the survivors of violence and perpetrators are, what the quality of services for the protection against domestic violence is, or how efficient institutions are in the field of protection from domestic violence, as there is no developed practice of systematic collection and analysis of data on domestic violence and universal system of recording and documenting cases of violence.
- None of the relevant institutions, except social welfare centers, have a legally regulated obligation to keep records. Some institutions and non-governmental organizations keep internal records of domestic violence, in order to overcome the lack of systemic and legal regulations, but this does not contribute to the improvement of the situation concerning the inadequate records on cases of domestic violence.

The lack of a universal way of keeping records and processing cases of domestic violence makes it impossible to monitor and analyze the prevalence and characteristics of the very phenomenon, as well as to monitor and evaluate support provided for survivors and sanctions and other measures against offenders. Moreover, the lack of public availability of data affects the low transparency of results of institutions and organizations, as well as the lack of public informing about the issue of domestic violence.

The Provincial Secretariat for Economy, Employment and Gender Equality, in cooperation with the Autonomous Women's Center, formed an expert working group in 2010, with the task to create a model of an administrative database of cases of domestic violence.

The working group has developed a model of keeping universal records in relevant institutions (social welfare center, police, health care institution, prosecutor's office, courts) for reported cases of domestic violence, that implies the establishment of electronic exchange of data among institutions. The basis for keeping universal records is keeping individual records in each relevant institution, based on which the exchange of specific data is performed, in order to ensure efficient interventions and protection of survivors. Based on universal records, it is also possible to form a database for keeping statistical information on reported and processed cases of violence. The concept of keeping individual and universal records, is elaborated in the document



titled *Record keeping sheet for support of survivors of domestic violence*.

The aim of keeping universal records and the electronic exchange of data is primarily to provide the best possible protection for survivors, to avoid the secondary victimization of survivors, to ensure the survivor is safe through the implementation of efficient (timely and linked actions of relevant institutions) and effective (lead to the cessation of violence and prevention of future incidents) interventions.

In addition to this, such record keeping should enable:

- monitoring and supervision of activities concerning each reported case of domestic violence (monitoring of the process, coordination of information among institutions the survivor turns to, compatibility of steps by institutions, supervision of whether employees are implementing procedures defined by law and subordinate legislation);
- keeping statistics based on which it is possible to plan the prevention of domestic violence, analyze the quality of legislation and whether it is respected in practice, to determine whether the prevalence rate of reported violence is rising or falling and to

The Government of AP Vojvodina adopted the model of the Records on cases of domestic violence developed within the project, in order to establish a universal registry for data exchange among the police, prosecutor's office, health care institutions and social welfare centers. The basic principles of the model have been included in the National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Domestic and Partner Relationship Violence against Women.

Through continuous advocacy for and support of the development of universal record-keeping, the project, together with its partners, succeeded in including this model in the national strategic framework as an example of good practice.

The establishment of such record keeping will ensure the generation of updated information of reported cases of violence at all times, more efficient information exchange among different institutions and services and will contribute to the quality implementation of measures.

recommend activities concerning the general and specialized training of professionals in the implementation of laws and measures.

The model of keeping records of registered cases of violence was presented at a public discussion organized by the Provincial Secretariat for Economy, Employment and Gender Equality in partnership with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the Autonomous Women's Center on December 16, 2010 in Belgrade.

The design of the Electronic records of domestic violence has been developed, as a basis for the development of a software that will enable electronic record-keeping on cases of domestic violence and potential electronic exchange of data among responsible institutions. The development of this software is currently in progress, after which the software will be piloted in selected municipalities of Vojvodina.

DEVELOPMENT OF INNOVATIVE SERVICES FOR WOMEN SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE

Despite our comprehensive work in raising institutions' capacities for providing protection for women survivors of violence, we started our activities with a clear understanding that women face numerous obstacles and that ending an abusive relationship is far from easy. Violence is almost never an isolated incident, but is present for long years before it is reported – in over half of the cases it is present from one to five years. The decision about ending an abusive relationship depends on a number of reasons: economic reasons, worrying about one's own safety and the safety and wellbeing of the children, physical and psychological exhaustion, life in isolation, lack of information about protection measures, no knowledge of laws and institutional procedures, lack of support and understanding of family members, but also lack of understanding of professionals about why women stay in a violent relationship.

Therefore, the provision of services provided by help-lines, such as emotional support, understanding women in a situation of violence, information about how they can protect themselves, rights and ways of reporting violence, are of great significance in the process of supporting women to escape violence.

Though cooperation with help-lines in Vojvodina has existed since the very establishment of the Secretariat, it especially intensified during the implementation of the project, through cooperation with five women's non-governmental organizations, the **Center for Women's Support from Kikinda, ...OUT OF CIRCLE - VOJVODINA from Novi Sad, SOS Women's Center from Novi Sad, Women's Alternative from Sombor and Roma Association of Novi Becej – Help-line for representatives of national minorities from Novi Becej.**

Joint efforts focused on supporting the establishment of a free, universal, 24-hour help-line for women survivors of violence in Vojvodina. The main goal was to increase the safety of women through the provision of appropriate information and support for leaving a violent relationship, as well as to encourage women to report violence and leave the abusive relationship.

In our efforts to establish the universal help-line, the following activities have been implemented so far:

- Strategic planning for joint action of help-lines in Vojvodina initiated and supported;
- Establishment of the SOS Vojvodina Help-line Network supported;
 - Expert support provided for the standardization of help-line services, in accordance with standards adopted by the Council of Europe;
 - Co-financing secured for the project "Establishment of the Vojvodina help-line – Improvement of support services for women

The universal help-line for Vojvodina
– 0800 10 10 10 –
 is operational as of October 2012, thanks
 to the support of the Telekom Serbia
 telephone company. Help-line support
 is provided on workdays from 10 a.m. to
 8 p.m. All calls, both from land lines and
 mobile phones, are free.

survivors of violence". The
 project involved the
 organization of a two-month
 training for new help-line volunteers, so that
 all organizations could ensure the same quality
 and capacity of services;

- Computers secured for organizations that
 needed them for their work;
- Cooperation with the Telekom Serbia
 telephone company established, thus ensuring
 technical conditions for the establishment of a
 free and universal help-line number for entire
 Vojvodina;
- The 0800-10-10-10 number is free and
 available to all women from the territory
 of Vojvodina on workdays from 10 a.m. to
 8 p.m. The service is provided by trained
 and committed volunteers of five non-
 governmental organizations: *Center for
 Women's Support* (Kikinda), ...*OUT OF CIRCLE*
 - *VOJVODINA* (Novi Sad), *SOS Women's
 Center* (Novi Sad), *Women's Alternative*
 (Sombor) and *Roma Association of Novi
 Becej – Help-line for representatives of
 national minorities* (Novi Becej), which are
 the members of the SOS Vojvodina Help-line
 Network;
- The special significance of this initiative is
 that among the organization in the Help-
 line Network providing services, there

are organizations that provide support to
 women with disabilities, Roma women and
 women from minority communities, who are
 more exposed to violence and face multiple
 obstacles in leaving an abusive relationship.

6. RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS ABOUT THE UNACCEPTABILITY OF VIOLENCE

Raising public awareness about the unacceptability of violence against women was an integral part of activities for combating domestic violence.

Starting from 2009, the Provincial Secretariat for Economy, Employment and Gender Equality implemented annual media campaigns under the slogan "I want you to know".

Besides a video and audio clip, the campaign involved the preparation and placement of posters and standing figures in the shape of a woman survivor of violence in public areas, institutions, shopping malls.

The media campaign consisted of three parts and was developed in accordance with project goals and activities.

The first part of the campaign was dedicated to raising public awareness about the phenomenon of violence against women, with a special focus on breaking down prejudice about this issue.

The aim of the 2010 campaign was to stress the high prevalence rate of violence. The television and audio





~~PREJUDICE: A woman survivor of domestic violence can always leave the perpetrator and then the violence will end.~~

MESSAGE: It is difficult for an abused woman to leave. She needs the support of all of us. To understand her is to support her.

~~PREJUDICE: It's the woman's own faults if she is abused, her own behavior provoked the violence and she deserves to be punished.~~

MESSAGE: It's not the woman's fault if she is abused.

clip included data from the research conducted in Vojvodina and stressed the dramatic prevalence rate of violence. With the message "women are not numbers, victims are not percentages, violence is a reality", we strived to break the prejudice that domestic violence is not a frequent phenomenon.

During the same year, with the support of the Novi Sad Public Transport Company, we implemented the action involving the placement of messages against violence against women on and inside 10 city buses. The placement of campaign materials was also supported by the Vojvodina

WORKING WITH DECISION MAKERS

Including Members of the Assembly of AP Vojvodina in activities contributing to the implementation of the Strategy, was a way of making sure that the issue of violence against women remained high on the political agenda in the Province, and a way to raise decision makers' awareness about violence against women. During project implementation, a training for assembly members was organized and reports were submitted to assembly committees, namely the Committee for Security and Committee for Gender Equality.

"All assembly members are informed, I am sure... also all the activities the Secretariat implemented – they submitted reports on everything, so I am certain that each assembly member is informed about what the provincial government is doing and that they all support this initiative." - member of the Assembly of AP Vojvodina.



Sports and Business Center, the Serbian National Theatre and Serbian Rail.

In 2011 and 2012, after training almost 3000 professionals who work on the solution of cases of violence against women, the focus of the campaign was on providing support for leaving an abusive relationship.

INFORMATIVE MATERIALS

With the aim of improving the level of information of women on domestic violence, protection measures and contacts of responsible institutions, the Provincial Secretariat printed 50.000 leaflets during project implementation, with relevant information in Serbian, Hungarian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovak and Romani language. Leaflets were designed for each municipality and contained contacts of competent institutions from which survivors can ask for direct assistance and support. Brochures titled "Stop violence against women" were also printed in all the above-listed languages and contain information on types of violence, legal regulations in this field, survival tactics and role of state institutions.

In order to promote the universal help-line for Vojvodina, the Provincial Secretariat, in cooperation with the Vojvodina Help-line Network, printed 15.000 leaflets in Serbian, Hungarian, Slovak and Romani.

The publication "If you know someone who is a victim of domestic violence..." was developed in cooperation with the London-based women's non-governmental organization Against Violence and Abuse – AVA. The publication contains practical advice on what people can do if a member of their family or friend is a victim of domestic violence, on how to help and be supportive and stresses the role men have in the elimination of violence.

HOCUDAZNAS.ORG website

In order to increase the availability of information concerning protection from violence against women and domestic violence, the www.hocudaznas.org website was launched in 2009. The website is primarily intended for women survivors of violence. It contains information on what violence is and its types, who the perpetrator can be, practical information on how to protect oneself in a situation of violence and practical steps women can take if they are victims of violence. The website also provides information about how the law regulates domestic violence and who to report it to. Information about the project, all project products (publications, leaflets, television and radio clips), as well as general information about domestic violence in Vojvodina, can also be found on this website. A special part of the website is the database of project participants, with relevant statistics on workshops organized during project implementation.



7. PREVENTION – WORK WITH YOUTH



- A significant part of the project was dedicated to the prevention of future violence against women and to the change of dominant behavior models which often justify violent behavior. For this very reason, work with youth was a significant aspect of the project.
- A training on violence in partner relationships was organized in 2009 for future professionals (students of law, psychology, pedagogy, social work, etc.).
- In cooperation with the Autonomous Women's Center and based on their experiences in working with youth, we organized a training of 16 peer trainers (14 girls and 2 boys) in 2009. The peer educators used this opportunity

for their personal development in gaining workshop facilitation skills, and, thanks to quality teamwork demonstrated during workshop simulations, the entire peer trainer group showed an enviable level of trainer skills and that it is fully prepared to implement the envisaged peer education program. Work in the field followed after the above-mentioned training. During a period of two years, a total of 45 trainings on gender equality, gender-based violence and prevention of violence were delivered, reaching 986 pupils from 45 secondary schools.

- Peer educators developed a youth guide on gender equality and gender-based violence, which was printed in 700 copies (available

"After the training, girls approached me several times with questions concerning concrete situations of abuse they themselves or someone close to them had experienced, which, in my opinion, is a sign that the training helped them." training participant (girl)

"Thanks to this project I learnt about the real situation, that is, the situation women are in, but not just women, but our entire society." secondary school pupil and training participant (boy)



through the Virtual Knowledge Center to End Violence against Women and Girls <http://www.endvawnow.org/>.

- Pupils of secondary schools who participated in peer educations are networked through Facebook, the Facebook page titled "I want you to know" was created to encourage networking and information sharing among youth, training participants.
- Some of the peer educators continued to deal with the topic of violence in partner relationships through their profession – as lawyers, psychologists at social welfare centers, help-line volunteers, etc.

"I realized that it's not just physical violence that is bad, but all other forms of violence. This project changed my attitude towards the fairer sex... I shared part of the new knowledge I gained with my friends, who also changed their opinion, but not just their opinion, but they also showed this change by their actions." secondary school pupil and training participant (boy)

"I pay more attention to situations in which women are vulnerable and I talk about it a lot and I share what experts in the field told me". secondary school pupil and training participant (girl)

8. Four years of establishing a comprehensive system to end violence against women: main findings of the project's external evaluation

The most important achievements of the project are:

- 1) increased level of understanding/knowledge of professionals about the issue of domestic violence and gender-based violence, as well as about the legal framework and providing specialized services to women survivors of violence;
- 2) increased knowledge among women from non-marginalized groups on domestic violence and services available in AP Vojvodina;
- 3) increased knowledge/understanding of general public about this issue;
- 4) increased understanding among members of the Assembly of Vojvodina, as key decision makers in AP Vojvodina, on implications of gender-based violence;
- 5) increased understanding of domestic violence and gender-based violence among youth.

These results are most probable to be sustained regardless of the project continuation.

- The project is highly relevant to the needs of beneficiaries, primarily women and professionals working in institutions.
 - The project achieved a high level of implementation of activities, a significantly high level of achieved outputs and considerable progress in the achievement of planned outcomes. The changes made to some of the activities and introduction of new, unplanned activities positively influenced the overall result of the project.

As it was designed as a tool for the implementation of the Strategy, the project was overly ambitious given the available human resources. However, the expertise and commitment of the lead institution and project partners, as well as the donor's understanding of the context, flexibility and overall efforts to support the grantee, has helped significantly in achieving a generally high level of project effectiveness.

- Another very important achievement is that there are three different forms of cooperation (protocol on cooperation, case conferences, coordinating body) in 15% of municipalities, while at least 28% of municipalities have at least one form of cooperation, which demonstrates progress in delivering effective and efficient coordinated measures. However, the sustainability of these results is fragile if the project does not continue. The analysis of qualitative data points towards the conclusion that at this point, the application of coordinated measures is fully adopted as a formal institutional response, but is influenced by the personal involvement and attitudes of professionals involved (educated).
- Though the project team has made significant efforts and was generally successful in awareness-raising of women from non-marginalized groups and the general public, the lack of continuous public outreach activities throughout project implementation (instead of only in certain periods), has made the team's task more difficult.

- The difficulties in acquiring reliable and consistent data throughout the evaluation process about reported cases of violence, services provided and measures taken by institutions to eliminate violence, stresses, once again, the importance of completing the universal system for keeping and sharing records on reported cases of gender-based violence.
- Due to its high level of achievements, the project had a high impact on women as the primary beneficiary group; this impact is reflected at local and provincial level. Moreover, thanks to efforts of the project team and established cooperation with state institutions and influence on the national strategy, project achievements will also have an impact on women at national level. The sustainability of support by provincial and national institutions to further efforts to eliminate violence against women, has positive tendencies, primarily because of the policy/legislative framework which is mostly in place.
 - The evaluation indicates that high impact has been made on professionals and their ability to deliver specialized services. It also points out the wide scope of the project (covering 45 municipalities), as well as the fact that, while needed at this stage of Strategy implementation, it was difficult to introduce follow-up measures (mentoring and monitoring) that would ensure quality support to application of the knowledge acquired.
- The project has also had a significant impact on members of the Assembly of AP Vojvodina, as well as on youth.
- The project has had a positive impact in local communities; however, the analysis indicates that the lack of systematic work with local decision makers has made it difficult to gain the commitment of the local self-government (in terms of local plans and budgets for the elimination of violence against women) and "ownership" of project results.
- The least progress was achieved in 1) increasing understanding/knowledge of professionals on violence against women from vulnerable groups and providing specialized services to these groups and 2) increasing understanding/knowledge of women from marginalized groups about domestic and gender-based violence and available services. The main causes for this are the high level of prejudice and low level of understanding of the issue of discrimination and its consequences among professionals, as well as specificities that need to be taken into consideration when communicating information to various vulnerable groups of women. In this respect, one of the main lessons learnt within the project is that special attention has to be paid to women from vulnerable groups.

In general, the project represents a unique initiative both in Serbia and in the Western Balkans region, both from the aspect of its scope, and its holistic approach. Systematic capacity building of professionals in such a broad scope, combined with research, awareness raising of women and general public, increasing understanding of domestic violence and gender-based violence among members of the provincial assembly and youth, has never been done in Serbia before. In that respect, the project as a whole represents an example of good practice that

can be used in further efforts to eliminate violence against women. Furthermore, the project resulted in important lessons learnt and good practices at local level that should be taken into account in further implementation.

Finally, through a systemic approach and a wide reach of target groups, the project provides a large degree of replicability: it can easily be replicated and applied at different levels and in different environments, with different target groups; it can be replicated in part or as a whole.

9. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

THE CITY OF ZRENJANIN - example of innovations in the functioning of the system at local level

The City of Zrenjanin has been recognized as a specific, in some aspects, innovative model of functioning of local institutions, which, even despite certain shortcomings, is showing good results. This could serve as a model that could also be applied in other municipalities. Its specificity is in the dedication and enthusiasm of sensitized individuals, who are building strong foundations for long-term change.

Institutions in Zrenjanin organize *case conferences*, which is one of the models of establishing cooperation that was promoted through the project. *Case conferences* imply the organization of weekly meetings of representatives of the magistrates' court, prosecutor's office, social welfare center and police, during which all potential cases of domestic violence reported during the previous week are discussed, and decisions are made about measures to be taken and protection procedures to be initiated in each concrete case. If necessary, already processed cases are reviewed. A local, informal coordination body was established, after trainings implemented within this project. It is comprised of representatives of the magistrates' court, prosecutor's office, social welfare center and police. Though cooperation exists and coordination is functioning, a protocol of cooperation has never been formally signed. There is no support of other political stakeholders

and there is no strategic document or action plan for the elimination of violence against women, nor are there funds allocated in the budget for this specific purpose. Despite this, the facts show success: the number of reported cases, as well as the number of solved cases has increased, and new innovative measures have also been introduced. More specifically, the Fund for the Support of Women Victims of Domestic Violence has been established. The money for the fund comes from fines instructed to be paid by the prosecutor's office. The Fund is managed by the local social welfare center, which uses the funds to provide financial support to survivors of violence. A special quality and specificity of the Zrenjanin model is that specific persons have been appointed to deal with domestic violence, a deputy of the public prosecutor responsible for the coordination of institutions' work and organization of weekly meetings (all deputy prosecutors work on cases of domestic violence) and a special judge of the magistrates' court for domestic violence.

This approach enables the specialization of professionals and increases the level of awareness about the issue of gender-based violence and affects the general efficiency of the system.

An illustration of this system is the unwritten, but functional protocol of cooperation, based on which the head officer of the Zrenjanin



Police Branch Office has information on all cases of violence, receives information from other systems and shares these with the representatives of the prosecutor's office, social welfare center and magistrates' court. The Zrenjanin Police Directorate also keeps special internal records of cases of violence against women, even though they are formally not obliged to do so. Stakeholders that are of key importance in responding to violence, the social welfare center and the police, have an agreement of cooperation based on which they notify each other – the police informs the social welfare center in case minor children are involved or if shelter accommodation is needed, etc. There is no written procedure for this either, only an internal agreement on the best possible response. There is also a shelter in Zrenjanin. Zrenjanin has a strong women's non-governmental organization, *ZEC (Zrenjanin Education Center)*, that recently developed a help-line service for women (including women survivors of violence). *ZEC* has established an agreement on cooperation with the deputy

prosecutor on joint work with women who have reported violence and are in the process of criminal proceedings. Other women's organization have still not established strong ties with other stakeholders of the local system for the elimination of violence against women. Local-level health care institutions have been identified as a weaker link in the system, but there are visible efforts to define the activities and responsibilities of health-care workers and physicians at the primary health care level when receiving women survivors of violence. Professionals from other systems stress the need for further sensitization and greater involvement of medical staff. The local coordination body has already started to work on overcoming this obstacle.

The involvement of schools and their supportive role in the improvement of the system for elimination of violence, is not balanced. Schools participating in UNICEF's "Schools without violence" program actively cooperate with other systems at the local level and respond according to protocol.

10. FURTHER STEPS

- ➔ Development of a new strategy for the elimination of violence against women and protection from domestic violence,
- ➔ Preparation of a policy document on the economic empowerment of women survivors of violence,
- ➔ Development of a special program for vulnerable groups of women,
- ➔ Further capacity building of professionals in the field of protection from domestic violence,
- ➔ Targeted support to local self-governments in the development of protocols and coordinated community response in 10 municipalities,
- ➔ Further development of the universal system of keeping records on cases and monitoring of institutional response to domestic violence through piloting of software for record keeping,
- ➔ Consultative support for social welfare centers in 45 municipalities in Vojvodina for organization of case conferences,
- ➔ Provision of support to women's non-governmental organizations for applying quality standards in services provided as response to violence against women.

OVERALL GOAL: Reduce domestic violence and gender-based violence in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina

OUTCOME 1:

Professionals in all relevant institutions and organizations in at least 30% of municipalities in AP Vojvodina deliver effective, efficient and coordinated measures to prevent gender-based violence by the end of 2012.

135 workshops organized, through which 1235 professionals gained training on violence and institutional protection, 990 on case conferences and 1043 on coordinated actions

567 legal professionals and police officers acquired information about characteristics of domestic violence and legal regulations to eliminate violence

488 trained professionals (SWC, NGO, health care centers) from 45 municipalities of AP Vojvodina completed advanced workshops on providing specialized services to women survivors of violence

36 future professionals completed training on gender-based violence

NGO activists from 13 municipalities trained on issues concerning domestic violence, gender-based violence and human rights of women (especially human rights of women from vulnerable groups)

2 trainings delivered to activists of NGOs representing interests of vulnerable groups of women

research on judicial practice in the field of gender-based violence conducted, including the analysis of 303 court cases and 303 prosecutors' cases, research results printed in the publication *Response of the criminal-justice system to domestic violence in AP Vojvodina*

Help-line Network of Vojvodina formed and universal help-line introduced, available on workdays from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

OUTCOME 2:

30% increase in the number of women survivors of violence (including women from vulnerable groups) who use services in 45 municipalities in AP Vojvodina by the end of 2012.

research on the prevalence and consequences of domestic violence and on the quality and accessibility of specialized services conducted and research results published in the publication titled *Domestic violence in Vojvodina*

35.000 leaflets, 8.000 brochures and 450 leaflet holders (in Serbian, Hungarian, Slovak, Ruthenian and Romani) distributed in municipalities of AP Vojvodina. Leaflets were designed for each municipality, containing contact information of relevant local institutions working on the prevention of and protection from violence

www.hocudaznas.org website uploaded and presented to the public at a press conference, on November 26, 2009. The website contains practical information about protection from violence, access to relevant institutions, media materials, publications and database of project participants and workshops

3 annual media campaigns organized to raise public awareness about gender-based violence, under the slogan *I want you to know* (2009, 2010, 2011). 3 TV and 3 audio clips developed. Posters and leaflets placed in public areas and public transport

conference on the situation in the field of elimination of gender-based violence organized in 2010, in Sombor, with 74 participants from 4 municipalities

<p>protocol on procedures of institutions in cases of domestic violence developed</p> <p>45 preparatory meetings and 23 case conferences held</p> <p>9 roundtable discussions organized for experience exchange in 2009 and 2010, with a total of 221 participants</p> <p>129 professionals participated in consultative meetings for developing coordinated response in three selected municipalities, while 246 professionals participated in roundtable meetings in two cycles: practice exchange (160 participants) and solution of cases of violence (86 participants)</p> <p>4 consultative meetings and one roundtable discussion organized for experience exchange</p>	<p>implemented research on the practice of keeping special records and documentation on survivors of domestic violence who turn to institutions for support</p> <p>the multi-sector working group consisting of 14 professionals developed the model of a universal system of keeping records in relevant institutions (social welfare center, police, health care institutions, prosecutor's office, courts) about reported cases of domestic violence, that envisages the establishment of the electronic exchange of data among institutions</p> <p>the design of the software for keeping electronic records on domestic violence was developed, as a basis for the development of the software that will enable the electronic recording of domestic violence cases and potential</p>	<p>electronic exchange of data among responsible bodies – software development is in progress</p> <p>roundtable titled <i>Towards Europe - Model of a universal database of cases of domestic violence</i> organized in Belgrade</p> <p>12 social welfare centers received computer equipment, 2 laptop computers provided for help-lines</p> <p>monitoring and evaluation of project implemented each year</p> <p>annual project review and activity planning organized</p> <p>two reports on violence and steps taken to eliminate gender-based violence submitted to the Government of AP Vojvodina</p> <p>annual audit of project implemented regularly</p> <p>external evaluation of project implemented</p>
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<p>the Provincial Secretariat participated in conferences of the Provincial Ombudsman's <i>Life Without Violence Network</i> and presented its results</p> <p>analysis of media reporting on domestic and gender-based violence implemented</p> <p>4 press conferences organized</p> <p>representatives of the Provincial Secretariat actively participated in public hearing organized by the Gender Equality Committee of the Serbian Parliament on the topic <i>Role of the media in the elimination of violence against women</i></p> <p>media strategy and materials for media developed</p>	<p>7 assembly members participated in the workshop on domestic violence in AP Vojvodina</p> <p>two reports submitted to the Committee for Security and Committee for Gender Equality of the Assembly of AP Vojvodina</p> <p>training organized for 16 peer trainers (14 girls and 2 boys)</p> <p>45 trainings on gender equality, gender-based violence and prevention of violence delivered to 986 pupils from 45 secondary schools in Vojvodina</p> <p>700 copies of the youth guide on gender equality and gender-based violence printed</p>	<p>secondary-school pupils, participants of peer trainings, networked through Facebook, Facebook page <i>I want you to know</i> formed to encourage networking and sharing of information among youth, training participants</p> <p>trained peer educators developed activities for the following project cycle. A new project titled <i>Peer education for equality in partner relationships</i> was developed and financially supported by the Provincial Secretariat for Sports and Youth</p>
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