

Empowering Survivors of Domestic Violence in the Tetovo Region

How We Did It



Tetovo, January 2020



Funded By:



Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Context of Project Implementation	3
Project Goals and Expected Results	6
Description of the activities	7
Community Workshops	7
Service Providers.....	8
Awareness Raising Campaign	9
Free Legal Service (Clinic).....	11
Women Empowering Workshops	12
Group Counseling.....	13
Lesson Learned	14
Facts and Numbers about the Project	16
Annex 1: Selected Case Stories	17
Case Study Story from a Women Domestic Violence Survivor: Baseline	17
Case Study Story from a Women Domestic Violence Survivor: Post Intervention	18

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview and to elaborate the process of the implementation of the project “Empowering survivors of domestic violence in Tetovo region”, by Women’s Forum-Tetovo and supported by the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women (hereafter “the UN Trust Fund”), managed by UN Women on behalf of the UN System¹. While the focus is primarily on the process from the perspective of operational efficiency and effectiveness, the report will also aim to reflect upon the most important achievements and challenges encountered during the implementation at the level of project objectives.

This report is dedicated to individuals from the community interested to learn about the domestic violence issues in Tetovo region; Development practitioners active in civil society organizations (CSOs) that may want to modify and /or replicate certain activities and approach; Representatives of local governments in Tetovo region; and representatives of the institutions at the central government, responsible for service provision and protection of Survivors of Domestic Violence.

The report is not following the format of regular semi-annual and annular progress reports and it will not substitute the final project report however it is based on the information and monitoring data presented from those reports. Taking into consideration the wide audience this report is targeting; the information is presented in the language understandable for readers who are not necessarily familiar with “project management” terminology.

It should be noted that the report uses internal assessment as an approach to determine the level of success for some activities and the complexity of challenges faced during the implementation. As such it cannot avoid the subjectivity in its judgement. For all of those who are interested to understand more about strategic aspects such as impacts, outcomes, sustainability and relevance of the project we recommend to read Project Final Evaluation prepared by the external evaluator.

About Women’s Forum Tetovo

Women's Forum-Tetovo is a non-governmental organization founded in January 2001 in Tetovo. It is dedicated to empowering women as equal partners in Macedonian civil society through promoting women's economic independence, raising awareness of gender inequality, working to end violence against women, and advocating the protection of all human rights. The organization aims to create a more socially inclusive community in the Tetovo region, where women are valued as equal decision makers in their communities. More information about the organization and its work can be found on: www.forumi.org.mk

¹*This publication is produced with funding from the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, however the views expressed, and content included does not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.*

Context of Project Implementation

Situation and developments surrounding our work

According to a 2012 baseline survey conducted by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the UN, almost 40% of women in North Macedonia have experienced some form of Domestic Violence (DV). Where patriarchal norms permeate social structures, confining women to traditional social roles, victims are trapped in cycles of violence, remaining silent, where over three-quarters of incidents go unreported (UNDP). The Association for Emancipation, Solidarity, and Equality of Women of the Republic of North Macedonia (ESE), along with Akcija Zdruzenska (2012) found that more than two-thirds of women from rural villages believe they are obligated to obey the decisions of the man in their family, where 45.2% of rural women must obtain consent from the male head of household to work outside the home, obtain medical assistance, or leave home without being accompanied. Where 70% of all people in the Polog Region live in rural areas, the environment in Tetovo is one in which women are marginalized from information and services, financially dependent, experience male controlling behavior, and face much stigma in speaking out against violence, let alone accessing services and support (Akcija Zdruzenska, 2016). Victims who choose to report violence face non-functioning systems of protection, where the state lacks a strategic approach to service provision for DV victims, although stipulated in the Law on Family (ESE and Akcija Zdruzenksa, 2012). Local institutions lack systematic approach in providing support services for those experiencing DV (ESE and Akcija Zdruzenska, 2012). Where services exist, they are unavailable to most victims when the project started with its implementation in March 2017. That time North Macedonia had 3 of the 20 women’s counseling centers and 6 of the 205 women’s shelters; the Council of Europe has determined necessary. Civic organizations have assumed a role in service provision, realizing the state’s lack of capacity, yet are unable to provide holistic support, receiving a mere 1200 USD annually in state support. Further, many women would not encourage other women to report instances of violence in the Polog Region, where less than 10% of respondents believe that existing DV support services meet all the needs of victims (Akcija Zdruzenska, 2016).

While the Municipality of Tetovo supported ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAW/G) interventions initiated by local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) or Macedonia’s Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, it rarely initiates interventions on its own to further that goal or highlights the issue as a priority in its budget or policies. Taking into consideration the context in 2017 the project aimed to introduce a greatly needed initiative within the local community to address the gap in both supply of support services and demand for services for the residents of Tetovo municipality and the municipalities of Tetovo region (Tearce, Zhelino, Brvenica, Bogovinje and Jegunovce).

During the project implementation, following the parliamentary elections in December 2016, new government was selected on May 2017 with the mandate to implement 20 strategic priorities of the program for the work of Government 2017-2020². Gender based violence, including domestic violence is mentioned in the strategic priority of social protection “The Government will establish a functional, citizen-friendly network of social protection institutions. The social protection network will include social support services forand gender-based violence protection services and protection services for people

²<https://vlada.mk/strateshki-prioriteti>

in need, especially those in social risk.”³ As a result of the government efforts, at the time this report was prepared⁴from the state budget the country supported 7 counseling services⁵ and five shelter centers that offer accommodation for the period not longer than 6 months⁶. Despite this modest improvement, the number of counseling and shelter facilities remains far below the number prescribed by Council of Europe even if two shelter centers operated by CSOs are added to the aforementioned numbers.

The parliament ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence and it entered into force on July 1 2018. Consequently, the government adopted the National Action Plan (NAP) for Implementation of the Istanbul Convention (2018–2023)⁷ in October 2018. The NAP (page 8) states” the country still does not have coordinated system for provision of support and protection for women survivors of violence nor it has the system for prevention of the violence”. At the begging of 2020, less than 1,5 year of adoption of NAP, there is no written report, available for the public, on which activities are implemented. From the brief assessment of the NAP, the first activity that the government plans to implement was the drafting of a new law on gender-based violence in order to align the legislation with the Istanbul Convention and its enactment by the end of 2019. So far, such law was not submitted to the Parliament. Furthermore, the NAP does not allocate budget for implementing planned activities which is an indication (similarly with the past practices) that the activities may not be implemented due to lack of funding or will be pending donor community support.

In the period from 2016 to 2018 34 murders of women were committed, 28 of which can be classified as femicides. Over 60% of femicides committed by perpetrators of a crime are committed by the incumbent or former spouse or extramarital partner with whom they lived in a community. In more than 80% of cases, the killing occurred in the joint home, or if the divorce proceeding started, in the home of the victim's parents. This further links the direct linkage of murders to women with the existence of domestic violence and / or other types of gender-based violence in the family.

New Law on termination of pregnancy has been adopted by the Assembly these days. Six years after the adoption of the restrictive law, the woman's need is again in the first place. One of the many benefits that facilitate access to abortion and recognizes women's reproductive freedom is the removal of administrative barriers, that is, the written request for this health service, compulsory biased counseling and the three-day waiting after counseling. The formation of the Trial Commission is shifting from the

³<https://vlada.mk/node/18229?ln=en-gb>

⁴ New parliamentary elections are announced to take place on April 2020 and technical government is in place as of 3. January 2020. With this the likelihood for more substantive progress is low as the technical government will only implement on-going operations until the new government is selected. Part of the technical government is New Minister of Labour and Social Policy and Minister of Interior, two key institutions for provision of services and protection for Violence Against Women and Girls survivors.

⁵ Counseling services are part of the government Centers for social work. There is one Center for one region of the country with exception of Southeast region which is not provided such service.

⁶http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/ns_article-prijavi-semejno-nasisltvo.nspix

⁷<http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/dokumenti.nspix>

current 12th to the 22nd gestation week of pregnancy, and the requirements for women to submit confirmations in cases of rape or unfavorable social status are also deleted. The new legal solution reduces ten times the doctors' penalties, which will improve their attitude towards the patients and improve the quality of the service. Abortion pills was introduced (the so-called abortion drug), which, according to the World Health Organization, is the safest way of abortion in early pregnancy. By expanding the service at the primary level, abortion becomes accessible to a larger number of cities and towns, thus reducing travel costs for women and their families.

Lastly, but not less important, support and protection services for survivors of the VAW/G (including DV) remain to be responsibility of central government⁸ despite the promise for decentralization of some of these services⁹. In this regard there are no legal instruments and mechanisms that will oblige central level institutions to perform better in-service delivery and fulfill the needs of the local government and the affected communities.

The OSCE led survey on violence against women¹⁰, published in 2019, key findings are “Violence against women is perceived as a fairly prevalent phenomenon in the country. Three out of five (60%) women think that violence against women is common, and nearly three in ten people think that it is very common. Fourteen per cent of women say they have experienced physical or sexual violence since the age of 15 at the hands of a partner or non-partner (7% among Albanian-speaking women versus 16% among Macedonian-speaking women). Psychological violence committed by an intimate partner is significantly more common, with 44% of women indicating that they have experienced this (43% among those women who completed the survey in Albanian). Attitudes and awareness differ among the major ethnic groups in the country. Just over two in five of the Albanian-speaking women surveyed consider VAW to be a common phenomenon (42%).”

Taking into consideration the above it can be concluded that the enabling environment improved but not to the extent that will trigger meaningful advancements at the institutional level. The developments elaborated above were legislative, at the strategic level. They were not followed up with consequent activities that would enhance existing behavior and performance of service providers. The work that was undertaken by the civil society efforts at the local level, with the immitted resources, reached individuals and affected their personal believes and behavior. In order these changes to be institutionalized, sustained and replicated, the awareness raising and education efforts should continue and be coupled with organizational requirements in a form of standard operational procedures, work processes and other primary and secondary legislative acts.

⁸Health, Education, Judicial system, Police system and Social Support are all centralized services when it comes to the Violence Against Women and Girls provision of support and protection to the survivors

⁹<https://vlada.mk/node/18229?ln=en-gb> : “Some authorities will be transferred to local self-government units as they are closer and better adjusting to citizen needs”

¹⁰<https://www.osce.org/secretariat/419264>

Project Goals and Expected Results

What we wanted to achieve

The project, aimed to address a vital need in the Tetovo region, which lacks both a counseling center and shelter, to provide DV survivors comprehensive, multi-sectoral support and response. By expanding Women Forum's free legal support for DV survivors to include holistic support services including financial skills courses (vocational/entrepreneurial), personal development workshops, and group counseling, women who report violence will be able to access support to meet their differentiated needs, preventing violence from reoccurring.

Firstly, the project strived to establish locally coordinated, multi-sectoral, holistic DV support services and response, where service providers as duty-bearers are able to better identify victims, suggest referrals, and provide gender-sensitive support. Creating such a system will help restore individuals' trust in institutional service provision, knowing they will not face judgment by service providers.

Secondly, the project will raise awareness among community members that VAW/G is a human rights violation through promotional materials, community presentations, legal literacy workshops, and roundtable discussions. Such a campaign will initiate public discourse in the Tetovo Region that can challenge the harmful social norms that tolerate VAW/G.

The project took place in the Tetovo region consisted of the urban municipality of Tetovo and rural municipalities of Tearce, Zhelino, Brvenica, Bogovinje, and Jegunovce. The activities were focused in the region's rural villages: Shipkovic and Sellce of Tetovo Municipality; Pirok of Bogovinje Municipality; Tearce, Glogji, and Dobroshte of Tearce Municipality; Rogachevo of Jegunovce Municipality; Brvenica and Chellopek of Brvenica Municipality; and Trebosh and Zhelino of Zhelino Municipality.

The anticipated results from the project were following: The service providers will draft, implement, and monitor a support system with greater victim identification-referral and gender-sensitivity; DV survivors will have exhibited greater confidence and personal agency, having learned new personal, life, and financial skills; and DV survivors will have gained the tools and knowledge to facilitate their own support group.

In addition, to the above the community members, participating in project workshops, will have greater knowledge and awareness of women's rights, understanding VAW as a human rights violation, and services available to survivors; At-risk women will have exhibited greater help-seeking attitudes and personal agency, having learned personal, life, and financial skills; and increased information and public dialogue about DV in the Tetovo Region through diverse media outlets.

Description of the activities

What we have done

Community Workshops

1.1.1. Rural Community Workshops (Community Workshops in 12 Rural Villages (10-12 persons))

Throughout the period of project implementation Women's Forum team visited women from rural areas and spoke with them about the domestic violence, available institutional mechanisms for provision of support and protection, existence of free legal service and how to reach out for help and assistance when it is needed. In this way the women who attended the workshops gained greater knowledge and awareness of women's rights. They understood that Violence Against Women and girls is a human rights violation and in case this happens it should be reported for institutions in charge to react and to provide service and protection. In these workshops the participants learned about the services available to survivors and how to reach them.



Total of 12 workshops took place throughout Tetovo region and 92 women participated, pictured above.

"Indeed, now I know that we are alone and the institutions are available for support, it feels better when you know the state is not tolerating violence...I feel more confident now" - Participant of the rural workshop

1.1.2. Youth Workshop (3 youth workshops for 15 participants)

26 participants were part of the three workshops with students at the age 18 to 22 years old. The purpose of the workshop was to raise awareness among youth for violence existence, to help them realize the services available for DV survivors and the way to access them in interactive way through role play and games. Discussion was held regarding the gender issues in the community, the prevailing patriarchal norms and how women face violence in the everyday life. Brochures and posters were distributed among youth to this workshop, pictured below.



“There is no shelter center in Tetovo and the fact that many women are unemployed and would not be able to leave their husbands in cases of domestic violence. Even more, some brought up that the society is so connected that women may not be able to report violence to the police if their husband drinks coffee with the police every morning since they are friends”

Participant of the youth workshop

The activities explained above aimed to increase the awareness of participants about women’s rights, help them understand that VAW is not a private matter but it is punished by law since it is a human rights violation. Also, these activities assisted the participants to learn about the services and resources available to survivors.

Service Providers

1.2.1. Service Provider Working Group (meets monthly)

The Service Provider Working Group was established by nominated members of the following institutions responsible for service provision and protection system: Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health, Center for Social Work, Local Self Government, WFT Legal Clinic and representative of WFT, Office of Public Prosecutor and the Court of Tetovo. This group developed joint multi sectorial protocol for cooperation of institutions and organizations responsible for protection and services to survivors of domestic violence and violence against women. The protocol was developed in participatory process and the participants discussed each of their challenges and gaps in regard to the issues related to domestic violence and violence against women. The joint protocol has 10 chapters regulating different aspects of the VAW/G issues and was approved by institutions members of the working group. The purpose of the protocol is to improve services for DV survivors and prevent double victimization. Also, the protocol was used as a bases for the Service Providers Trainings on Service provision and protection mechanisms. After the protocol was developed the group continued to meet on monthly basis and they are working on strengthening mutual trust and collaboration and avoiding double victimization among local institutions regarding women survivors of DV and women at risk.

1.2.2. Service Providers Trainings on Multi-Sectorial Protocol and its Mechanisms

Each month WFT conducted visits to the local institutions (Tetovo Municipality, Police of Tetovo, and Center for Social Work, Court and Public Prosecution of Tetovo) and together with participants from the service provider working group (local institution representatives) held trainings with the 43 employees of public administration from each sector. During these trainings the Multi sectoral Protocol which was previously formalized was represented and the importance of its implementation was highlighted. In addition, the training had a session about women's rights, victim identification and gender sensitive approach.



Awareness Raising Campaign

1.3.1. Press Conference (2 Panel Discussions/Press Conferences for 10-15 persons)

1.3.2. Brochures and poster distribution (Brochure/Poster Design and Distribution)

1.3.3. CSO Round Table Discussion

1.3.4. Billboard Advertisement was provided as a part of the awareness campaign.

In parallel to other efforts, the awareness raising campaign took place. It aimed to increase the knowledge and awareness of community about the fact that Violence Against Women and Girls is criminal act and sanctioned by law. It is violation of women human rights and there are support services and protection measures for all those who survived the violence. Through the campaign the topic of domestic violence and other types of violence against women became more visible in public discourse. It encouraged women to break the cycle of violence and the community to become less tolerant to violence acts. The campaign was multifaceted and used several mechanisms that reinforced each other.



Two panel discussions followed by the Press conferences took place during the lifetime of the project. The first one at the beginning of the project implementation which served to announce the project activities and planned result. Press Release was given for TV media on local level and newspaper article was published regarding the project. Second press conference is dedicated to share achieved project results, key achievements and lesson learned.



1200 awareness and informational posters, 3200 brochures, T-shirts were distributed throughout Tetovo Region. The campaign in Skopje and among TV media and interviews took place and billboard advertisement was provided within the campaign, pictured to the left. Also, within the campaign the efforts to increase the knowledge of other Civil Society Organizations about the VAWG and domestic violence took place, aiming to advocate them to be proactive in this regard and advocate and mobilize their members to fight the violence against women. Representatives of 11 CSOs participated on the roundtable and exchange of opinion and discussion took place among them.

Our assessment is that the campaign was effective and efficient since the number of reported cases of domestic violence increased which surpasses the average number of reported cases at the clinic comparing to the other periods.



Free Legal Service (Clinic)

Women Forum has established free legal clinic for survivors of violence against women since 2002 (year). The clinic provides services of the attorney for ending and prevention of domestic violence and protection of the survivors by: Raising awareness of the citizens for the issue of domestic violence and its prevention; Provision of legal aid and protection of survivors of domestic violence, and representing at court proceedings.

The survivors of domestic violence once registered at the Free Legal Clinic are also reported as cases at Center for Social Work, at the Police of Tetovo or at the Prosecutor office in Tetovo, in line with referral mechanisms. Also, there is ongoing collaboration between the Free Legal Clinic and local institutions that work on the prevention of domestic violence.

The Attorney mostly provides support in preparing the proposals for temporary measures to the court, appeals for divorces, guardianship for children under the age of 18 and similar. Within the project implementation period around 100 survivors of violence against women used the services of the legal clinic out of which in most of the cases survivors experienced psychological violence, followed by physical and economic violence.

Comparing with previous years of working we can surely say that the hard work with the implemented activities has achieved an increased number of cases reported. This is not just as a result of the raised awareness but also that by winning the court cases we achieved to raise awareness among the potential

M. was expelled from the family house and she was in the street. At the beginning her family was not supportive so it was only the support of a friends that found her apartment and food to survive. The apartment where she lives now is close with the apartment of the representative of Women Forum so in this way M. was introduced to a Lawyer and legal clinic of Women Forum. This was the first time she received any support whatsoever from an organization or institution after 7 years of continued abuse by the husband

Source: Excerpt from Project Case Story

delinquents that the domestic violence is a crime, that the women survivors of domestic violence are empowered to report violence and that will be punished by the law.

Within the framework of this project for the first time free legal clinic expanded its services not only to the legal protection and counseling but also in personal development workshops, financial skills trainings (personal, vocational, entrepreneurial), and group (peer) counseling. These are elaborated in the following section.

Women Empowering Workshops

2.1.1. Cycle of Financial Development, Personal Development, and Legal Literacy Workshops

2.1.2. Developing Curriculum Workshops with Facilitators

2.1.3. Recruitment of DV Survivors for Cycle of Workshops

2.3.1. Three cycles workshops to 60 at-risk women (20 women/cycle)

2.3.2. Recruitment of at-risk women for each cycle of workshop

2.3.3. Check-in with facilitators about workshop curriculum for the at-risk women

The workshops were tailored-made for women survivors of the violence and women at-risk of violence. The purpose of the workshops was to provide to the women needed tools and knowledge that will help them to enter labor market and increase their employability. Also, to provide encouragement to them and restore the confidence to assert their rights, access support, and more importantly to make their own decisions.

Women survivors and at-risk of violence participated in personal development workshops, learning skills in decision making, conflict management, and communication; legal literacy workshops, learning about women's rights and navigating the local legal system; and financial development workshops, learning entrepreneurial skills, vocational skills, labor market skills, and personal financial skills, including budgeting.

The workshops were organized in following topics:

Developing basic employability skills and how to start a business consisted of the modules:

Basic Financial Literacy Skills¹¹, Job Counseling¹² and Entrepreneurship¹³. Three cycles of these workshops were organized and each cycle lasted two training days and 95 participants attended the training, pictured to the right.



¹¹Keeping Records Safe, Financial Inventory (income, property, debts, Assets and Liabilities, Budgeting (saving and spending – Spending Plan Worksheet), Banking services, Managing one's money (steps to good credit)

¹²How to search for a job, how to write a resume/CV, Job profile – skills and resource assessment

¹³A basic overview on how to start a small business

Personal development workshops, consisted of 5 modules: Identity & Self-Esteem, Communication & Conflict Management, and Decision Making & Personal Agency. Three cycles of these workshops were organized and each cycle lasted three training days. 80 participants attended the training, pictured below.



Vocational training courses consisted of sub courses: Hairdresser for men and women and Tailoring and sewing. Hairdresser training was implemented in 5 cycles, each cycle lasted for 2 months and it had 144 classes per cycle. Tailoring and sewing was implemented in 4 cycles, each cycle lasted for 2 months and it had 144 classes per cycle. 95 participants attended the training, pictured below.



Group Counseling

2.2.1 Peer Support Group

For the first time in the Tetovo city Women’s Forum Tetovo through the UN Trust Fund project has managed to establish peer support group for women survivors of domestic violence. The women are

"I would never stay in violent environment and keep up with the physical, emotional and economical abuse. I feel old now but I want to enjoy in peace the remaining of my life thanks to the encouragement I got and the support I was provided".

Participant of peer support group

chosen from the lines of women registered at the Free Legal Clinic, part of Women’s Forum, who wanted to participate. The group is led by a psychological therapist who has experience in women’s rights, domestic violence and gender-based violence. The Peer Support Group started its work with 11 women and now its member’s number is grown to 15. The meetings take pace twice a month and during the meetings the safe

space if provided for the members to speak about violence and women's rights and with gained self-esteem.

The group work was started after individual one on one session for assessment of needs and risk were made with each member. The individual assessments resulted with two recommendations/referrals to medical professionals due to long term psychological issues that require different type of support and treatment. In the Initial Stage of the group work the principles of work were defined, expectations, roles and goals were discussed and through couple of sessions trust between members was built.

In the second stage of the group work, the Transition Stage, participants were led in a pleasant and positive atmosphere in order to decrease anxiety, fear and shame and increase sharing and support. Some members were shy and closed preferring individual exercises but as the sharing of others including the facilitator was more and more open, they gradually become more relaxed and encouraged to discuss the topic in a group manner. The individual tempo is always respected by the facilitator but also it is promoted as a group principle. The group entered its Working Stage since all participants feel comfortable to get into the deeper issues. Members are generally able to explore thoughts and emotions triggered with each topic of the sessions. Each session starts with recap of the previous one, followed with brainstorming, or warm up exercises on the new topic

Lesson Learned

There are many take-aways from the project which can be used by different stakeholders and other interested parties and these are presented below.

Organizational Capacities: An important lesson learned is that it is necessary to build the internal capacities of the organization in order to better respond to the needs of the target group – survivors of domestic violence and vulnerable women - and to better implement actions that meet the target's group diverse needs. This can be done through specialized trainings such as the capacity development workshop of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women team, which we attended in March 2017 in New York. This training provided to the project team new knowledge and skills for the implementation of this project with specific nature, which can also be applied to future projects. Another way is to undertake assessment of the available expertise outside of the organization and engage/partner with experts that can provide required knowledge and set of skills. In this regard Women Forum has established these partnerships during the stage of project proposal and managed to involve external expertise for monitoring and evaluation process and for women empowerment workshops (personal development, financial, legal and entrepreneurial modules).

Cooperation with Stakeholders: In the field of cooperation, WFT has come to learn that there is great importance to sharing experiences and cooperation with relevant stakeholders. During the press conference for example, many of the community members expressed willingness to collaborate in the efforts to eliminate domestic violence against women. Some even shared their experiences interacting with institutions in the search of support. Even more, during the CSO conference many of the CSOs recognized that they had not known of the services available to survivors of DV and are willing to support the awareness campaign and inform their respective target groups of the support available.

Cooperation with relevant stakeholders (CSOs that do not work with women exclusively, local institutions, and national authorities), where each offers a different perspective and experience, demonstrates the importance of involving stakeholders, through the entire project cycle to achieve sustainable results.

Importance of Visibility: The value of providing greater visibility of the activities of the organization is of the pivotal importance for achieving sustainable improvements in a form of changes in the behavior and in the daily practices. For example, many of the users of the free legal clinic services decided to access the services based on the positive example shared by other women who had been to the clinic. Greater visibility of the motivation, activities, and services of WFT, allows a greater number of constituents to become familiar with the work of WFT and also participate in its services. The distribution of informative materials like posters and brochures produced within the project greatly contributed to the visibility of the activities, as well as promoting the efforts to end domestic violence against women at other events WFT representatives attend, where many have commented that they have seen the posters throughout Tetovo city.

Institutional readiness and support: It is difficult to establish coordinated response and referral mechanism at the local level of the government with the institutions and services operating on the central level of the government. In case of Service Providers Working Group and developed multi-sectorial protocol for cooperation there is no explicit legal requirement that will oblige participating institutions to cooperate. The cooperation is based on the mutual understanding and organizational willingness to provide more effective and efficient support and protection services. However, having in mind upcoming parliamentary elections in 2020, and in case the changes of the leadership at the institutional level as a result of the elections, it may happen that members of the Service Providers Working Group will be replaced by different nominated representatives. In this way developed capacities will be lost and inter-institutional cooperation may be weakened. It is important one organization/institution to be responsible to coordinate the work of the Working Group and update new members with implemented activities and developed mechanisms and procedures.

Capacities and systems: There are issues which are outside of the scope of the project yet influencing its success and achievements. One of such issue is the need for improved human and financial resources at the institutional level. At the point when the project started with the Service Provider Working Group a representative of key institution, Center for Social Work (CSW) in Tetovo, responsible for the cases of Domestic Violence, was appointed to the position of Center manager. Having in mind that she was only one person responsible for the cases of Domestic Violence and as such understaffed, it was difficult to achieve not only expected project result but also the Center could not perform its ongoing work. Eventually, the CSW nominated the replacement which took over assigned tasks within the group with additional support from the WF.

After reviewing the case study stories from a survivor of domestic violence and vulnerable women from the Tetovo Region, it can be noticed that the disconnect among institutional service providers still exists but to a lesser extend from the one at beginning of the project. This can be attributed to better understanding of the domestic violence by service providers, existing joint multi-sectoral protocol, and regular joint meetings of the working group. By comparison of the case stories at the baseline stage of

the project and the case stories after finalization of the activities, it is evident that service providers started to adopt more gender sensitive approach, they used more effective and efficient procedures which avoided double-victimization of the women reporting the violence and referral mechanisms are operational and functional. The stories can be found in Annex 1 of the report.

Ongoing Collaboration: Another thing would be the collaboration with the local institutions. It can be challenging to collaborate with representatives from local institutions because not always all of them that are nominated to participate in the project activities are interested in collaborating. Some individuals consider the project work as an additional work to their regular work in the office and as such do not pay equal importance and relevance. By continues involvement and interaction with them, representatives Women's Forum team manages to find an appropriate way to ensure local government representatives in the project activities and explain that project is contributing to their regular work in the office.

Facts and Numbers about the Project

349 members of the community have increased their knowledge about women's right after the exposure to project. This represents critical mass in community that can request by the authorities and institutions in charge to improve the quality of the provision of protective services to survivors.

311 is total number of participants who were directly involved and benefited from the project.

On average only 22% of these women were able to identify DV services available and institutions providing those services before they were exposed to project activities. After project activities were implemented, 74% of the involved women were available to identify services and institutions.

35 at risk women have learned personal skills, have gained knowledge in personal finances, vocational trades, and entrepreneurship. They have successfully completed the trainings and were granted with certificates

2 participants immediately got employed whereas 1 participant opened her own business as a result of greater self-esteem and increased vocational and financial skills.

26 women DV survivors have participated in personal development, financial development, and legal literacy workshops and other project supported activities. They and have gained greater help seeking attitudes. All of them are using legal aid free service and are about to divorce the perpetrators.

Annex 1: Selected Case Stories

Case Study Story from a Women Domestic Violence Survivor: Baseline

F.B. has 39 years. She lives in Tetovo and was born in Kaqanik (Republic of Kosovo). In Macedonia she came 12 years ago when she got married. She has finished primary education and is not employed in formal sector. However, F. works in informal sector and provides cleaning and maintaining services in households in Tetovo. She is a mother of 2 children. The children are at the age of 11 (female) and 2 (male).

F. has been married for 12 years and her marriage was formalized (citizen marriage). She is divorced two (2) years ago since the last 18 months of the marriage she was subject of severe physical and physiological violence from her husband due to his problem with alcohol abuse.

At the beginning F. escaped to her family in Kosovo, however due to the fact that the children were already enrolled in school she needed to return back in Macedonia.

Despite initial inhibition in violence, very soon the husband returned back to violent behavior and continued with physical abuse. As a response F. reported the husband in Police and at the same time, she was directed in Hospital to undertake the control of body functions for herself and for the daughter. Following this, the police administration referred the case to the Center for Social Work and the CSW consequently connected her with the lawyer from Women's Forum.

Given that the daughter was in school, when F. reported what happened, the school allowed the daughter not to attend school classes for 3 weeks until the situation was stabilized.

In a meanwhile and with the support of the lawyer from Women's Forum, F. started the procedure of divorce. The court was very slow in undertaking the divorce procedure and insisted first to have 1-year trial period that would allow overcoming the differences and keeping the marriage.

Unfortunately, the situation escalated even more and F. wanted to expedite the divorce procedure. Another cycle of violence took place which F. reported again in the police station. The police invited the husband for interrogation but nothing seriously and more meaningful took place. To make situation even worse, the person in charge for her case in the CSW was changed with another one. New person was not up to the task, she was rude and not at all sensitive to F's situation nor open to listen to F's problems and challenges she was facing during her interaction with her husband. Furthermore, an incident happened with formal invitation (through regular post service) when the postman, a friend of her husband, didn't submitted her an invitation letter for the meeting at CSW. The person in charge at CSW accused F. for "being irresponsible" and not respecting the institutions in charge. As a consequence, new person from CSW threatened that she will take the children away from F.

Wanting to protect herself and the children, F. reported a case in the headquarters of CSW in Skopje. This action yielded with results and new person was more respectful and slightly more responsive, although not as it should be and far away from the situation to put in the center of support the needs of a client. The procedure of divorce was prolonged for almost two years when finally, F. was divorced.

Her husband does not have contacts with the children nor is he providing alimony for children. This is new fight of F. with him and with institutions in charge so they protect her rights and insist in receiving the financial support guaranteed in the law but, unfortunately, very difficult to be put in practice.

Conclusions: F. is very brave women that was fighting for her rights despite the fact that she didn't know how the system function and who are all involved stakeholders. The only support mechanism was the one provided by Women Forum and to some extent police. Unfortunately, all other mechanisms failed or they were not up to the task. It is especially disappointment the fact that CSW gave her the most difficult time regardless that it was no doubtful that F. was domestic violence survivor.

Furthermore, this case proved once more that institutions in charge don't have standards of professional etiquette and behavior. The response of an institution depends from an individual that your case is assigned. In case of F. she was fortunate at the beginning, but once the person in charge was changed, negative experience started in a time of very difficult period for her. It required extra strength to fight it back not only with perpetrator but with the institution of CSW as well. This fight resulted in positive outcome; however, it was not supposed to happen in a first place.

Case Study Story from a Women Domestic Violence Survivor: Post Intervention

End of the project

Background: A. S. is 33-year-old. She has finished the primary education and she was recently employed. This is her first employment since until now she was either financially supported by the husband or by her father and/or brother. A. is in marriage 12 years and she has two minor children. One 11 years old and the second one is 6 years old.

While the communication and interaction with the husband is fair, the interaction with mother and the sister in law has been problematic until the point when two of them physically attacked A. and beat her up.

The work of the institutions: When the incident took place, she reported what happened to the police that intervened immediately and they have directed A. to the doctor in order to examine her whether serious injuries took place.

In addition, the police guided her and reported the case to the Center for Social Work that reacted through the dedicated meeting and directed A. to the Women Forum Legal Clinic. A. started the procedure of divorce with the support of the lawyer of women Forum however her situation is very delicate due to the children.

The first child stayed with father family at the time when A. decided to move from family house to her brother apartment and he is rejecting to have any interaction whatsoever. While the second child was with A., on the occasion of Muslim holiday "Fitr Bajram", the father under the pretext that he will buy the child new clothes, took the child with him and since then he is denying A. to establish any contact with both children.

A. is desperate and she cannot do much in order to connect with her children since she is officially married. She is looking forward to the progress of her divorce procedure in order to move forward.

Institutions at this point are not providing any other support since A. is receiving the support of the lawyer from the legal clinic and she will be representing her in front of the institutions in charge.

A. is satisfied how institutions have reacted and with the manner the services and protection are delivered. She regrets the fact that she didn't reported the case earlier and sort out the violent conditions much earlier. It should be noted that the social norms are very difficult when it comes to the children. In the patriarchic society, as the one of Tetovo is, there is unwritten rule that the children stay with the father, while the mother goes back to her family until another husband is identified for her. Given that most of the Albanian rural women are unemployed, in case divorce takes place, the expectation is that father/brother provide to her temporary shelter until new opportunity for marriage appears. Once the opportunity materializes, the daughter/sister is married and her new husband should provide for her, in return she provides "housewife" services for him. In such situation, the children would only be a burden and complication to the prospects of finding new husband for the daughter/sister.

A. doesn't want to be in such situation, she has found the employment and she wants to fight for her chances to have full custody over the children.

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