

Final Comparative Report of the Project  
*SPEAK OUT!* Empowering Migrant, Refugee  
and Ethnic Minority Women  
against Gender Violence in Europe

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edited by  
**FRANCA BIMBI**



Agency of Migrant Women  
against Gender Violence

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# Agency of Migrant Women against Gender Violence

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*Franca Bimbi*

The project *SPEAK OUT! Empowering Migrant, Refugee and Ethnic Minority Women against Gender Violence in Europe*, financially supported by the Daphne Programme of the European Union, represents the construction of a path whose aim is giving voice to migrant, refugee and (ethnic) minority (MREM) women in Europe to prevent and stop gender violence.

The project worked with different groups of MREM women in five different areas – Padua (Italy), Madrid (Spain), Barcelona (Catalonia, Spain), Helsinki (Finland) and the Netherlands – to give voice to women from the grassroots of society, using self-empowerment methods and implementing resources for gender agency in the local contexts.

The Project comes from the need to develop *intermediate bodies* having the capability of opening and maintaining the transcultural debate on VAW (the international acronym for violence against women) and the ability of exercising social pressure to find the most suitable VAW politics from the grassroots of the European civil society. Soliciting the need for new tools for gender active citizenship is necessary to improve two most widespread policies against violence: the normative and institutional policy and the protection of the victims.

The project *SPEAK OUT!* relates to the improvement of self-empowerment and agency on VAW issues especially for MREM, but it could be considered as a general model to improve an active citizenship of European women.

Especially in this new multicultural Europe, it is necessary for women to delve into the debate about «symptoms of gender inequality that become manifest as distinct forms of violence to look at structural and ideological causes that underlie the problem beyond the injury caused» (The United Nations Special Rapporteur 2009, 33).

The agenda against gender violence wants a new development of the individual and a collective agency of women against the institutional and social forms of male domination that to overcome gender stratification among natives and migrants with the scope to limit the victimization approaches.

The project originated from one concern: in the European public debate MRM women do not have a voice, because of the fact that discussions allow only the expression of men's and "native" women's points of views. Especially on VAW issues, the lack of a public debate on the points of view of the MREM women about what standard rights to guarantee, the meanings of violence, the tools to prevent the causes might increase MREM women's vulnerability. MREM women are more vulnerable to gender violence for three main reasons:

1. discriminated access to a life without aggression, because of a set of obstacles which stand in the plans of action for care, protection and justice. Human rights violation could be very closely linked to discrimination, not only as far as gender issues are concerned, but also regarding legislation on immigration. The growth of migrant women in all European countries did not entail egalitarian family policies for them;
2. MREM women are particularly exposed to the *victim's victimization* when the injuries received are considered part of the whole cultural system of their country of origin, or they are considered “normal” for women belonging to some ethnic or “racial” group. This specific *victim's victimization* suffered by MREM women split and superordinate native women or women with full citizenship from migrant women, and the minorities considered “adequate” from the one that can be considered as barely integrated;
3. on gender violence issues, MREM women are exposed to a double loyalty challenge: to their communities of origin and to the system of rights that guarantee the protection from violence in the immigration countries. The two systems are represented as internally homogenous. Nevertheless, the migrant's communities of origin have highly differentiated features of patriarchy in the European context. At the same time the equality and anti-discrimination standards about gender appear highly differentiated in different E. U. countries, according to a normative and cultural perspective and particularly regarding family issues, marriage issues and the consideration of the body of women. The persistence of violence against women even in the most egalitarian European countries highlights how patriarchal forms still exist in “gender regimes” causing women self-determination.

MRM and native women are victims of a double static representation of the European society fuelled by the supposed traditional patriarchy of migrants and the western conception of human rights in a post-patriarchy society. This ideological representation limits especially MRM women in the use of an important resource guaranteed for all people by the European Union in its Fundamental Charter: the rights of the cultural pluralism and the recognition of the differences.

Our project is very innovative. This is why we can state without a doubt that we are pioneers. The project brought together awareness-raising and prevention workshops, with a training course for migrant women and self-help groups, where the group of women involved could design their own workshops to prevent violence against women. This experiment not only raised awareness on the phenomenon of gender violence, but encouraged a deep understanding of the origin and causes of violence, as well as a general view on how to lead groups and promote prevention.

From a practical standpoint, the meeting of women, who are citizens on different degrees and ways, permitted to face some common roots regarding vio-

lence, taking into account that both in the country of origin and the receiving country, gender violence means violence against women acted by men and violence depends on the asymmetric relationship among women and men.

Our activities did not avoid the main controversial issues relating to the different, “modern” or “traditional” patriarchal regimes and our aim was to find tools to reinterpret, debate and negotiate cultural practices considered as unchallenged communitarian values. In this way, we worked also on the reciprocal cultural prejudices among migrant women with different origin and among migrant and no-migrant.

During the initial part of the project we developed a preliminary research in the local welfare system with a survey and some focus group. The survey involved professionals working in social and health services, associations and NGOs and it was focused on training and work method on VAW, on risks perception related to VAW on migrant and non-migrant women, and on the different meanings of violence. Focus groups were conducted both with professionals and with MREM women especially on the VAW meanings (Madrid addressed focus group also to men of different migrant origin). This research aimed at knowing a) the relations between the professional styles and the interpretation of the migrant women presence as “clients”, their demands, the meanings on VAW in different cultures and in different professional groups; b) if migrant women and professionals share almost or in part the same expectations regarding the reciprocal behaviour and similar meanings relating to VAW.

Considering the training methodology as crucial for our purposes, during the second part of the project, we worked with a peer-to-peer approach, to support the self-empowerment processes, to be self-critical compared to the traditional pedagogy up-bottom, to avoid the idea that universal and human rights could be considered only from “our” point of view. Starting from personal experiences, *SPEAK OUT!* Laboratories aimed at giving voice to different discourses of MREM women about migration experiences and intimate, familiar, institutional and racial violence.

We tried to build transcultural vocabularies, considering diversities and creating dynamics of encounter and mutual comprehension. We tried to confront a transcultural vocabulary especially relating to the universal words recognized by all the women working with us as opposed to violence: *reciprocity, dignity, respect*. In all cultural definitions on VAW considered by women or groups of women, we discovered some common roots of the male domination being critical on the hegemonic cultural aspects especially on the field of the time organization, family division of labour and sexuality.

In the five local projects, after the end of *SPEAK OUT!* experience, some of the women involved have begun to develop multicultural or specific groups, which can act as a “bridge” among others MREM women, their community and the local networks. These groups of women will promote awareness actions and information related to violence against women issues.

In Padua, the group of women attending *SPEAK OUT!* training defined a new profile, the Community Mentor. They drafted the *Community Mentor Charter on Violence against Women* that contains the guidelines for an *active citizenship* in the territory.

Considering the aim of the project, the trainers perspective and the MRM women's efforts to end VAW in gender relationships and in the whole complex of social and interpersonal relations, we could summarize as the success of our training, the activities following three achievements:

- a) the implementation of the participants' capabilities to put together their differences, their multiple positions and belongings and to find some practical common approach to work against violence;
- b) the possibility to give birth to some form of *intermediate bodies* acting for MREM women self-support in the territory;
- c) the increasing self-consciousness of the attendees at the project and of the five teams about the importance of recognition of differences as well as the implementation of the gender rights to enlarge the substantial citizenship of MREM women, giving them the possibility to have different autonomous voices on VAW in the public European arena.

Women from *SPEAK OUT!* will continue to search effective links with women associations, migrant associations, institutions, public and private professionals, schools, in order to develop a network of people that work at different levels to combat violence against women.

Mentor, the Mentor networks, and the others similar experiences developed by *SPEAK OUT!* project, constitute important resources to contrast violence against women, to implement peer-to-peer approaches and to give voice to the different cultural standpoints. In this perspective they could be a tool to improve a multicultural and gender sensitive European citizenship, where women and men of different origins, languages, ideals and nationality could work together for a better European future.

For the future perspectives it is important to underline also some challenges of the project:

- a) *the refugees issue*: because the minor attendance by refugee women, the focus of the project was especially on migrant women. We need specific consideration on the different typologies of refugee women for improving our approach to their demands;
- b) *the minorities issue*: minority women were modestly involved in the project. The Helsinki team and The Netherlands team were successful in involving minority groups, partially for the previous work with them and partially because the team was made up of minorities. Independently from objective reasons, it would be necessary to delve into the correspondence between the label and the target of the minority groups. We tried to involve "ethnic minorities" in the project, but "ethnic" is not a neutral word. Very often the label "ethnic"

could not be used for the historical minorities living in the EU countries, and in the present time some of the supposed “ethnic minorities” are labeled as *ethnic* for many social and political reasons. The topic requires a better understanding of the links between social exclusion processes and racialization ones, in today’s Europe. The Italian team did not opt for the word “ethnic” as referred to minorities in its project. The Dutch team opted for “ethnic” referring to the self-assigned identity by different groups of MRM women;

- c) *the different interpretation of the cultural pluralism* within the five areas. As we can read in this Report, the five teams showed their different assumptions on meanings referred to “the other” and understanding of VAW, family, and women’s body issues, depending by the stress on the national normative system of rights (supposed as universal) or on the rights to the difference (supposed as universal principle too). In the first case, cultural relativism is considered as moral relativism. In the second the two are distinguishable and the cultural relativism perspective could be the first option for a non-colonial encounter with MRM women. On this subject we can find also different feminist principles and practices considered in the project.

The construction of a common European transcultural agenda against violence on women is far to be completed.

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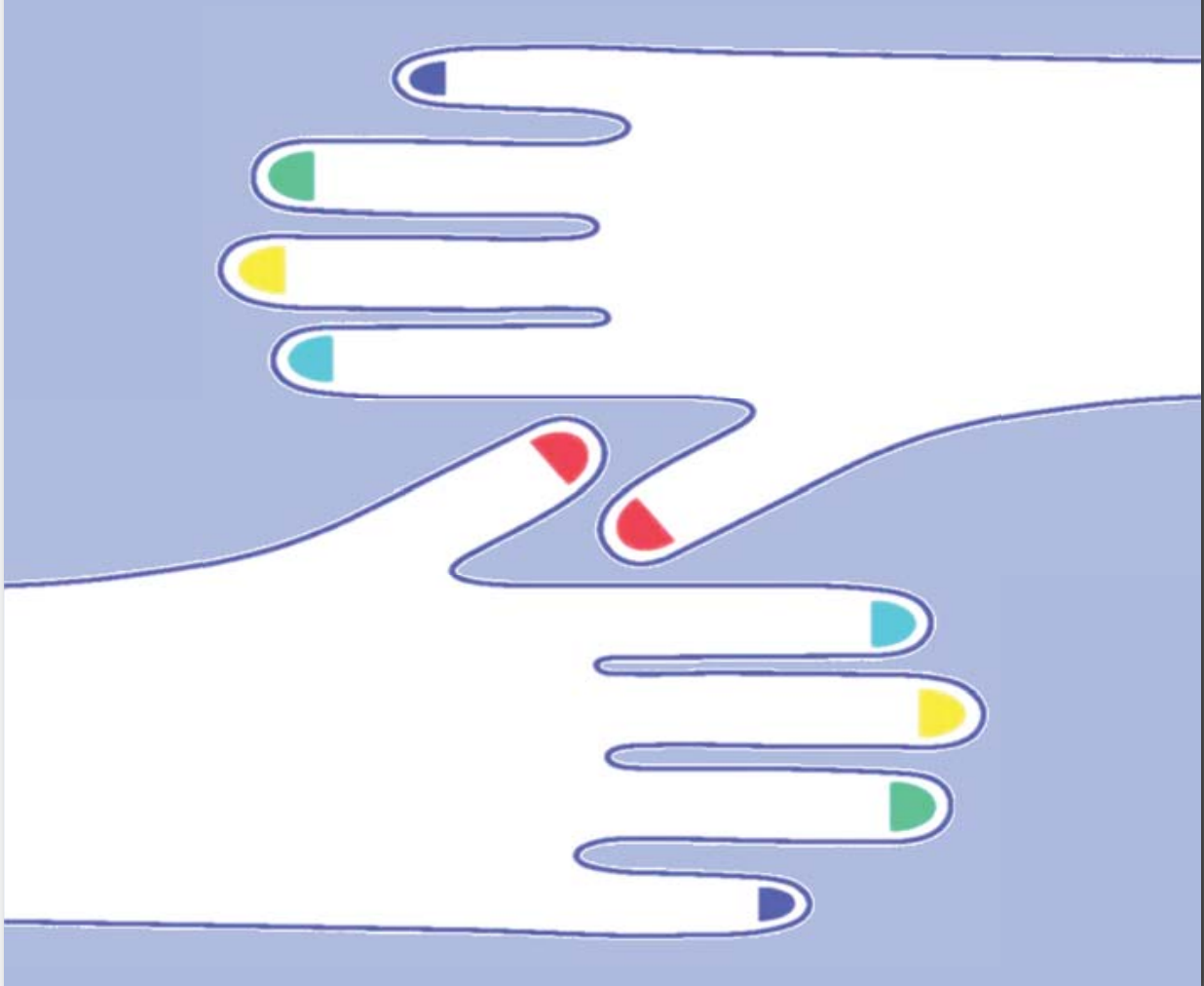
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**Part 1**

**Preliminary Research  
in the Local Welfare System:  
Opinions, Representations  
and Interpretations**





## 1.1. Defining Questionnaires and Focus Groups

*SPEAK OUT!* project aimed at promoting the MRM women's capabilities to get involved in peer-to-peer activities in their territory, in order to build networks with community groups and with the local welfare system to in this way improve their active citizenship.

For this reason the preliminary research has been developed in the local welfare system with the objective to get in touch with the network of volunteers and professionals working with immigrant women. They can recognize the *SPEAK OUT!* project participants as partners for future common actions in the prevention and support on VAW issues, particularly related to MR(E)M women.

The possibility that the project gave birth to intermediate bodies, who could express the agency of MREM women on VAW issues in the territory, should be prepared with the antiviolence centres, the health and social services and the associations of the territory. The only way for the construction of a real network was the comparison of the different points of view on gender issues, on the meanings of violence and on the positive presence of migrant professionals.

We are aware that the professional styles and ways to receive users in the social and health services, and by anti-violence professionals or volunteers, could be influenced by the objective knowledge of the characteristics of users as well as by the social representations and prejudices relating to them. Thus we considered important to analyse the representations, perceptions and knowledge related to gender, migration and VAW through a survey among professionals of the local welfare system, in order to value the existence or persistence of gender, "race", or other kinds of prejudices or stereotypes, which can constitute a negative cultural background towards MRM women or conversely to identify the professional's friendly attitudes towards them that give space at the raising voice of these groups. It appeared of particular importance to understand if and how the local welfare system is prepared to contrast symbolic violence, which consists in forms of direct or indirect exclusion of the MREM discourses and of the local social dialogue.

The persistence of prejudices and stereotypes in institutional or other services contexts can entail forms of secondary victimization, which is strictly connected to the continuity and efficacy of training on VAW received by professionals.

The preliminary research was based on the assumption that if we know better the different meanings on gender and migration issues embedded in the professional practices and in social practices of different groups of women and men, professionals and volunteers, migrants and natives, it is possible to achieve a better understanding among all of us, as permanent or temporary citizens and people living in the same country and in the UE.

We used two tools: a survey and some focus groups. The questionnaire was basically the same in all the five contexts, even if each partner chose to adapt some questions at the local debate. On the other side the focus groups were built in relation to the specific group of participants involved. The questionnaire issues and areas are:

- the typologies of MREM women as users of the specific local service;
- the requests received by the MREM women;
- the VAW training received and considered as the most suitable by respondents;
- the professional and organizational patterns for anti-VAW services considered as the most suitable by respondents;
- the VAW visibility in the Country and their reasons;
- the violence against women considered as the most widespread and the most dangerous in the Country;
- the causes of VAW;
- the increased risks to become victims in the intimate relationships, and the risk differences for women and men;
- the exposition to VAW following the different rules relating to marriage, intimate partnership and family formation;
- risks of violence for MREM women in the Country;
- VAW and controversial issues in the European debate as “honour”, veils, female genitals modifications;
- VAW and prostitution(s);
- definitions of VAW and definition of a life free from violence.

The preparation of the questionnaire required a very intense exchange between the five partners, particularly regarding some crucial aspects: the definition of migrant people, of minority and of violence. The definition of migrant doesn't refer only to normative-legislative aspects, but also to other kinds of definitions that are commonly used in the public debate.

The Finland team wrote: «we acknowledge that the term “migrant” is very problematic and that many people who have lived in Finland for a long time do not necessarily consider themselves as “migrants” anymore». TIYE International wrote: «in the Netherlands migrants are the former labour market immigrants from the sixties and their children, of Morocco and Turkey. The term is not used for the member states in the EU, who also came here with labour market migra-

tion in the sixties». TIYE is defining people from the former colonies as black, «a proactive political terminology (...) and the lessons learned is that racism cannot be swept under the carpet (...) we use ethnic minorities versus the white dominant ethnic majority». As we said the Italian team in its work did not adopt the word “ethnic” referred to minorities.

The whole debate during the questionnaire’s creation about the most advisable expressions to identify violence would be very fascinating to rebuild, because it highlights the non-homogenous national culture between the partners and the differences in the approaches related to different feminist models. “Violence against women” was chosen because it was considered more descriptive and clear than “gender violence” or “gender based violence”.

Since the project dealt mainly with violence by men against women in the interpersonal relations, it appeared necessary sometimes to clarify “heterosexual relations” or other kinds of violence: “domestic violence or “family violence” or “intimate violence”.

In relation at the focus groups they were focused on the meanings of violence and in the comparison between the vocabularies of migrants and professionals of the social and health services and of the anti-violence centres. The Madrid team decided to use the focus groups to delve into the meanings of violence in the migrant communities and comparing women and men. Focus groups permitted to highlight, better than the survey, the difference between explicit and implicit stereotypes and to catch the deep resistance between different understandings on the personal and family life.

## 1.2. The Survey among Professionals

### Some Preliminary Remarks

The common guidelines for this survey foresaw a common questionnaire to be addressed to professionals (at least 100 women) working in VAW-related social services, or that could get in touch with VAW cases, and having also MREM women among their users.

In order to interpret the results, it is necessary to show how the partners performed this survey in different ways, and with different sample composition, using an adapted translated version of the questionnaire (and therefore not perfectly equivalent), or adding questions addressing particular topics of interest at local level.

The questionnaire was first designed by Padua’s teamwork and then discussed among the partners in order to achieve a common model. All the partners adopted the “large version” questionnaire (three versions were proposed: short, medium or large).

The Dutch and the Finnish research groups used the common model without any sensible modification other than the translation, and adaptation for the

local context. The Italian research group also used the common version, adding one more question, in order to explore the perceived link between religious belonging (not further specified) and civic sense. The Spanish and Catalan research teams, although adopting the same common “large version” questionnaire, made also some minor changes: Madrid’s team, for example, added one item referred to as “cultural relativism” and gender definitions of VAW, while Barcelona’s researchers asked the professionals and were concerned with the definition of “sexist violence” (*violencia masculista*) used by the new Catalan law; or with the necessity to implement further positive policies to achieve gender equality, or to recognize freely chosen “sex work” as a job, and more.

## Surveys Characteristics

In Table 1 are presented the main features of the different surveys (sample characteristics, administration method, questionnaire adopted).

Table 1: The surveys with professionals

	Padua (Italian Team)	Madrid (CEPAIM)	Barcelona (SURT)	Netherlands (TYIE)	Helsinki (Monika)
<b>Number of questionnaires</b>	206	101	108 (+ 53 abandoned)	95	88
<b>Collection</b>	By hand/ in person	Online	Online (2000 sent)	By hand/e-mail	By hand/ in person
<b>Type of questionnaire</b>	Large version with minor changes	Large version with minor changes	Large version with minor changes	Large version virtually unchanged	Large version virtually unchanged
<b>Professionals and services involved</b>	36% Professionals of the Hospital of Padua; 33% NGOs and private social association; 22% Public authorities; 9% Local Police. Public sector = 68% of the sample	20% Social services; 11% Migrant services; 9% Women associations. Public services = 50% of the sample; NGOs = 37%.	24% Service managers; 15% Social workers; 11% Teachers; 10% Psychologists; 9% Educators. Public org. = 57% of the sample; NGO/Ass. = 36%	42% Volunteers with BMR women; 25% Non-profit organisations; 9% Private org; 16% Work for the government; 8% Work for public service sector	41% Public sector (authorities); 45% NGOs; 11% Private sector; 2% Finnish Lutheran Church
<b>Native/migrant among professional</b>	93% Italian citizens (91% born in Italy)	96% Spanish citizens(88% born in Spain)	84% born in Spain	80% Different national origins	86% Finnish citizens(78% born in Finland)
<b>Gender</b>	75% Women	85% Women	88% Women	—	100% Women
<b>Education</b>	23% High school; 55% Graduate or University education; 20% Post-graduate education	94% Graduate education	54% Graduate education	25% High school; 35% HBO; 25% MBO;9% Graduate; 9% Post-graduate education	40% Graduate education

	Padua (Italian Team)	Madrid (CEPAIM)	Barcelona (SURT)	Netherlands (TYIE)	Helsinki (Monika)
<b>Clients typologies considering the migration context</b>	71% have “many” or “all” migrant women; 97% have “none”, “few” or “very few” refugees or asylum seekers; 20% have “many” minority women	81% have “many” or “all” migrant women; 92% have “none”, “few” or “very few” refugees or asylum seekers; 39% have “many” minority women	All VAW services except one served “few” or “very few” migrant women. 70% have “none” refugee or asylum seeker women	43% have “many” “black women”: 31% are migrant women, while only 5% are refugee women	59% have “many” migrant women; 49% have refugee women; 17% have “many” ethnic minority
<b>Training on VAW in the last three years</b>	24% received specific VAW training	63% had training on VAW	60% had specific VAW training	—	Little over half of the respondents received training on VAW

There are several aspects to highlight. Starting from the samples: the partners collected different amounts of questionnaires, and had variable capacities to select their respondents (for example promoting the survey “in person” and being able to get into different institutions).

The degree of “self-selection” is a significant aspect to consider in order to interpret results. It possibly affects, for example, the rates of people that received previous VAW training in the different sample, the composition of the services involved, but certainly the overall results. In all partners’ samples the broad majority of respondents are women (in some cases the sample is composed only by women, as required by the common guidelines).

Except for the Dutch survey, the respondents are mainly “native-origin” professionals working in public and private social services. The Dutch sample is the most heterogeneous by national origin and the survey is also characterized more for being delivered in a network of professionals working in particular with BMR women, with a greater amount of volunteers (42%) compared to the other samples.

Education levels are not easily comparable when considering the different Degrees and School titles at national levels. In any case, they can be considered as all relatively “high”, demonstrating that the survey has been directed to generally well-trained professionals. This is a very important point if we consider that the questionnaire, for its complexity and difficulty, was addressed specifically to professionals with an expected high level of expertise.

The five surveys results are able to give a synthetic view on five European regional contexts of local welfare networks in relation to VAW.

They all have in common the engagement with VAW issues considering the intercultural context where heterogeneous networks of welfare services are fac-

<sup>1</sup> This self-assigned label was used considering the context and aims of the TYIE organization.

ing the challenge to work with different publics, and different cultural perspectives.

Even if results are not statistically comparable, thanks to this survey we are able to trace the different hegemonic discourses, tracing a map of the “common sense” that is shared by service professionals in the different contexts.

### 1.3. Similarities and Differences between Partners in the Focus Groups

Preliminary research activities foresaw the realization of at least three focus groups that aimed at investigating the representations of violence against women and the meanings of that in the experience of MREM women, moreover through the focus groups partners could analyze the different interpretations of professionals working with violence against women issues.

Each partner organised the focus groups following different applications in order to respect its operational context.

Some considerations concern methodological aspects. All partners realized focus groups with MREM women, professionals working in social and health services, associations and NGOs and mixed focus groups both with professionals and with MREM women. Only CEPAIM decided to create focus groups only with migrants, excluding professionals, two of them with women and two with men.

Some partners also aimed at involving ethnic minorities, in particular the University of Helsinki and the Padua team tried to involve Roma people and actually the University of Helsinki achieved that organizing a focus group with Roma professionals and another one with Roma people; on the other hand the Padua team could create a focus group with Roma and Sinti professionals, but did not organize a focus group with Roma people due to the difficulties to get in touch and explain to them the project’s goals. Table 2 summarizes the main features of the focus groups realized by partners.

As the location is very important for the success of a focus group, all partners paid attention to create a comfortable and safe environment for the meetings. Each partner chose a specific way to conduct the focus groups adapting it at the local context. In general, all partners made a track of questions or statements on the topics they wanted to debate, but they did not use it as a rigid schedule, rather as a flexible tool to adapt to the focus group participants.

During the focus groups almost all partners approached the violence against women topics through general and delicate questions, using queries or statements from the questionnaire, using drawings and sketches; only CEPAIM decided to invite participants and to start the discussion not talking directly about violence against women, but preferring gender equality issues and letting violence issues come out from the participants’ words.



Table 2: Participants to focus group discussions in the five countries

	Types of focus group (FG)	Number and origin of participants
<b>Padua (Italian Team)</b>	1 FG with women (both native and of migrant origin) working in social and health services, associations and NGO in the territory of Padua	7 women (3 of migrant origin, from Albania and Rwanda)
	1 FG with migrant women living in Padua	5 migrant women (Moldavia, Romania, Ukraine and Morocco)
	1 FG with women working with Roma people	6 native women
	1 FG with women professionals (both native and of migrant origin) and migrant women	2 native women and 5 women of migrant origin (Rwanda, Albania and Romania)
<b>Madrid (CEPAIM)</b>	2 FG with migrant women	12 migrant women (Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Brazil, Nigeria, Syria, El Salvador, Nicaragua)
	1 FG with migrant men	8 migrant men (Morocco, Senegal, Mali, Congo, Algeria, Nigeria, Ecuador)
	1 FG with migrant men	10 migrant men (Guinea Conakry, Venezuela, Morocco, Ghana, Senegal, Liberia, Cameroon, Ecuador)
<b>Barcelona (SURT)</b>	1 FG with professionals	15 participants (Spanish and Moroccan)
	1 FG with migrant women	7 migrant women from Latin America
	1 FG with professionals and members of migrant women associations	7 migrant women (Spanish, Latin American and Moroccan)
<b>Netherlands (TYIE)</b>	1 FG with counselors	7 women (Surinamese-Dutch; Philippine-Dutch; White Dutch; Ethiopian-Dutch; Turkish-Dutch; Somalis-Dutch; Moroccan-Dutch; Dutch Antilleans)
	1 FG with BMR women	13 women and 3 counselors (some of them from India, Africa, Equador, Suriname, Somalia, Ethiopia and Philippine)
	1 FG with counselors and BMR women	14 women (from different countries of origin) and 4 counselors in Den Hague (NL)
<b>Helsinki (Monika)</b>	1 FG with women (both native and of migrant origin) working in NGOs	3 women (2 of migrant origin)
	1 FG with Roma women working in NGOs	2 women
	1 FG with Roma women	3 women of Finnish Roma minority
	1 FG with Russian women	2 (1 returnee, 1 migrant)
	1 FG with Somali woman	1 (refugee)
	1 FG with minority and majority professionals and activists	3 women (1 migrant, 1 Finnish Roma minority, 1 Finnish majority)

In the five areas at the focus groups woman who had suffered violence also participated, even if during the meetings the moderator did not ask for personal experience, participants started to talk about their personal life to better explain what they consider violence.

About the topics prevalently debated, there are similarities and differences. The Italian team, CEPAIM and SURT discussed mainly about meanings and definitions of violence, types of violence against women, causes of gender violence, and risks of violence for MREM women. The University of Helsinki engaged the same topics paying particular attention to some specific situations (isolation, discrimination, prejudices) suffered by some MREM group of women

living in Finland: Roma women, Russian women and Somali women. TIYE focused its meetings on the violence suffered by BMR women.

The results of the focus groups with professionals have many similarities among the partners: MREM women are considered by professionals mainly vulnerable, because of their legal and social brittleness, the absence of social and friendship network and the absence of knowledge about legislation and welfare resources. The University of Padua, SURT and TIYE researches highlighted the forms of control exercised to the MREM women from partner/husband, family or origin community.

Another topic chose by all partners concerned gender equality and the roles of women and men. During the focus groups with MREM women; participants, who came from different countries, expressed their opinion on gender equality, social rules and normative patterns in their origin country, but they also compared them with the situation in the migration country.

In all the focus groups organized in the different contexts emerged symbolic violence as a heavy form of violence; participants discussed about the difficulties to recognize and identify it.

Similarities and differences in the data from all the European partners' research raise one last reflection on the situation of Roma people, the cultural – linguistic group which was explored through some focus groups in part by the Italian team, and more broadly by the Finnish researchers. In both researches, it was related that Roma people (“travelling EU Roma”) in most cases are not recognized as political refugees or asylum seekers, instead they are considered as “tourists”, mentioning the word used in a Finnish focus group.

Roma women are exposed to multiples types of violence: participants of Italian and Finnish focus groups in particular mentioned intimate violence, domestic violence, and violence between the families or by the whole Roma community, the forms of control exerted by partners/husbands on the woman's sexual and reproductive health.

Another similarity among Italian and Finnish results was that for Roma women it is very difficult to get in touch with social and health services because of a lack of trust in institutions and authorities. It emerged that Roma women are also subjects of discriminatory attitudes, experienced in different public spaces (the Italian focus group reported the case of hospitals, particularly obstetrics and gynaecology departments; Finnish researchers cited the discrimination that Roma women face in bars, restaurants, shops), also due to the typical dresses of these women (“long skirt”).

**2.1. Tools and Limits for a Comprehensive Insight**

Preliminary research on social perceptions and representations of violence against women was designed considering an intercultural context of migration. The results presented two distinguishing activities, addressing different types of people, as part of this work: a) the survey addressed specifically to professionals working in the social service network; b) four focus groups involving women, both professional and citizens, native or migrant. The survey collects mainly representations of professional working in Padua and Valdagno. Most of them resulted to be “native” Italian (over 90%). The discourse that emerges is therefore the result of a privileged standpoint, in a context of services where the categories “migrant” and “native” often overlaps with the categories “operator” and “client”.

A questionnaire is not usually considered the best methodological instrument for exploring partially unknown meanings/vocabularies regarding a rather hidden social phenomenon, because it is considered a “closed” instrument, predetermined and rigid. However, assuming a certain level of expertise by professionals with respect to VAW, this instrument proved to be appropriate in order to sum up the main perceptions/opinions/positions. Therefore, the survey technique is qualitatively only a second-best, imposed by the need to obtain a good deal of comparable information, but losing the chance to get a more “comprehensive” insight. This is the reason why the survey was coupled by the technique of focus groups, where this insight was successfully achievable.

**2.2. Survey on Social Perception of VAW among Services’ Professionals and Volunteers Considering a Multicultural Context**

During the survey administration, we got in touch with 27 different locations of services: associations for migrant, Hospital and health services, local police, trade unions, NGO’s, social services, schools, etc. Services are both public (68%) and private, and public health service professionals are the main group of respondents (36%). Requirement for the inclusion of services in the survey was the presence of migrant women among clients (even indirectly, as in the case of schools). Seven out of ten respondents said that they have a good number (“somewhat” or “all”) of migrant women among the service users.

The construction of many links to a network of services, for the questionnaires' collection, was a basic step in order to draw a "virtual" map of services working or possibly collaborating on this issue, even when their institutional tasks would not be explicitly such. This "connection" effect is a significant success of the survey work. The heterogeneity of the services contacted is another important point to consider.

The active collaboration of services was essential, considering that questionnaires were delivered and collected face-to-face, and administered thanks to one referent in each service, specifically trained for this purpose. The results were presented in three different occasions to the project partners, to people taking part in "mentorship" training course, and to broader public.

## **Designing an Intercultural Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was first designed by Padua research group, and then discussed among the project partners in order to achieve a common model (written in English and with three version: large, medium, small), then translated and adapted to the different local contexts.

Padua's group used the common large questionnaire, translated to fit the Italian linguistic-discursive and institutional context, with one more question regarding "religiousness" and "civic sense".

The preliminary work of questionnaire designing and the debate between the partners significantly made clear what it means to have different vocabularies to name violence against/on women, making the concept of "interculturality" work inside the imagined community of Europe.

## **How to Read Results**

In presenting the results the percentages are always rounded off because the numbers are too small to make decimal points significant: the use of percentage in the results presentation is due to the need of clarity and simplicity more than to statistic precision. Sometimes the percentage representation is virtually meaningless (groups of 6-15 cases), but was held as a synthetic way to return results.

## **Description of Professionals Involved**

We collected 206 questionnaires (out of 250 that were distributed) in 27 different services: 152 by female and 54 by male professionals, mainly in the municipality of Padua and with the participation of the City of Valdagno.

The questionnaires were delivered in person, in order to select the respondents with respect to our objectives. Despite the time required to fill out the questionnaire, and the cognitive effort (47 questions, some with 16-18 answer choices, or with batteries of a number of statements which express their agree-

ment / disagreement), only a few respondents have abandoned before reaching the end (5-6 cases out of 206).

The questionnaire, as mentioned, collected mainly representations of Italian born professionals (91%), with Italian citizenship (93%): only 3% of them have a different nationality, and another 3% dual citizenship. The professionals that represent the Italian sample are otherwise significantly heterogeneous in terms of age, types of service, professional profile and seniority.

As requested by the project general framework, the survey was addressed in particular to women (75% of the sample). The majority, 80% of the overall sample work for more than two years in the service where they were reached by the survey; of them, 20% were working for 15 years, 36% for 6-15 years. Obviously majority is strictly related to age.

Regarding the year of birth of the professionals involved, the range goes from people born in 1930 to people born in 1990. Around 29% of the respondents were born before 1960, 21% in the 1960's, 25% in the 1970's, and 21%, from 1981 onwards. Age and seniority distribution show how the sample represents different generations and experiences.

Respondents to this survey present a relatively high level of education: 74% of respondents had university degrees or higher grades of education (55% a Bachelor, Master degree or Diploma; 19% Post-graduate degrees). All respondents have at least High School degrees.

## **Description of Services**

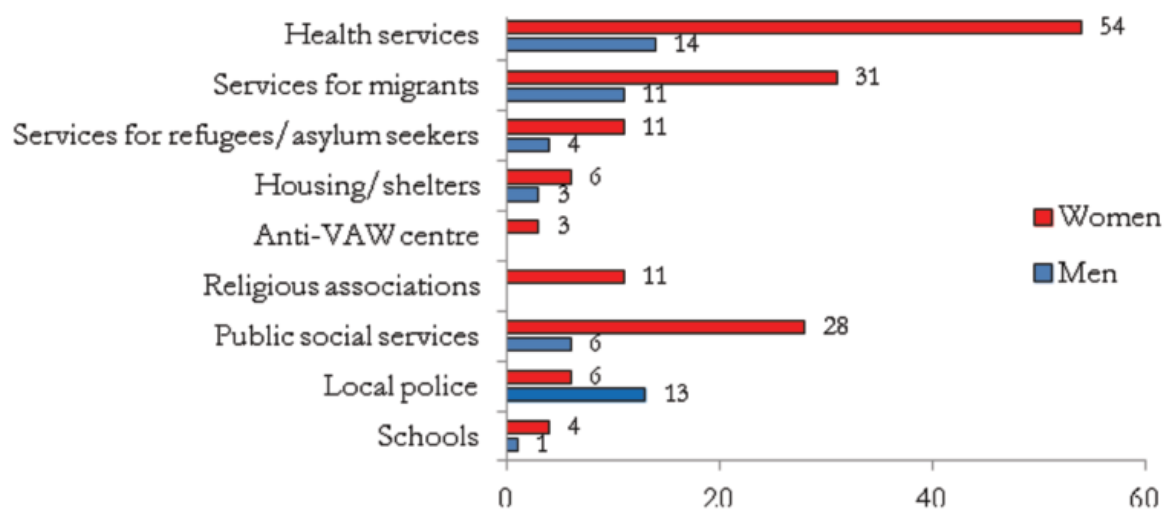
Figure 1 presents the sample composition by service vocation/function. For analytic purposes, service typologies have been aggregated forming four broad groups: about one third of the sample (36%) is made up of health professionals working at the Hospital (medics, psychologists, nurses, in “sensitive” departments such as first aid and family counselling), and by social workers and cultural mediators also working at the Hospital.

Another 30% of the sample represents the reality of private associations and NGO's, and includes secular and religious organizations (Catholic Church) that perform various activities for migrants or generally for socially disadvantaged groups (housing, schools of Italian language, orientation services, legal advice, etc..). This group also includes Trade Union professionals working specifically with migrants (CGIL and CISL).

The area defined approximately as “local welfare authorities”, picks up the remaining 33% of cases, and is made up by professionals working for the social services of the municipality, in helpdesks for migrants and refugees / asylum seekers managed by the municipality (e.g. CISI), in schools (teachers and directors) or as local police officers.

However, in many cases it makes more sense to separate the local police from the rest of the “local welfare authorities”, for the rather different tasks they per-

Figure 1: Number of respondents (total: 206) by type of service involved



form. Local police alone represents 9% of the overall sample (19 cases), but they are 25% of male respondents.

Gender subsamples are in fact rather different: among women 38% are working in health services, 32% in Ngo' or associations, 26% in public welfare services and only 4% are police officers. Among men, workers in health services are still the majority 31%, police officers are 25%, whereas 25% work in Ngo's/associations and 19% work in the public welfare services.

Consequently the subsample results are to be interpreted as rough indications considering all the different characteristics of sub-samples.

We already mentioned that the basic requirement to include a service in the survey was the presence of women migrants among the service users. Seven professionals out of ten said they have "a lot" (64%) or "all" (7%) migrant women as clients, while almost all the remaining cases (around 27%) declared to have "few" (18%) or "very few" (9%) migrant women among service users.

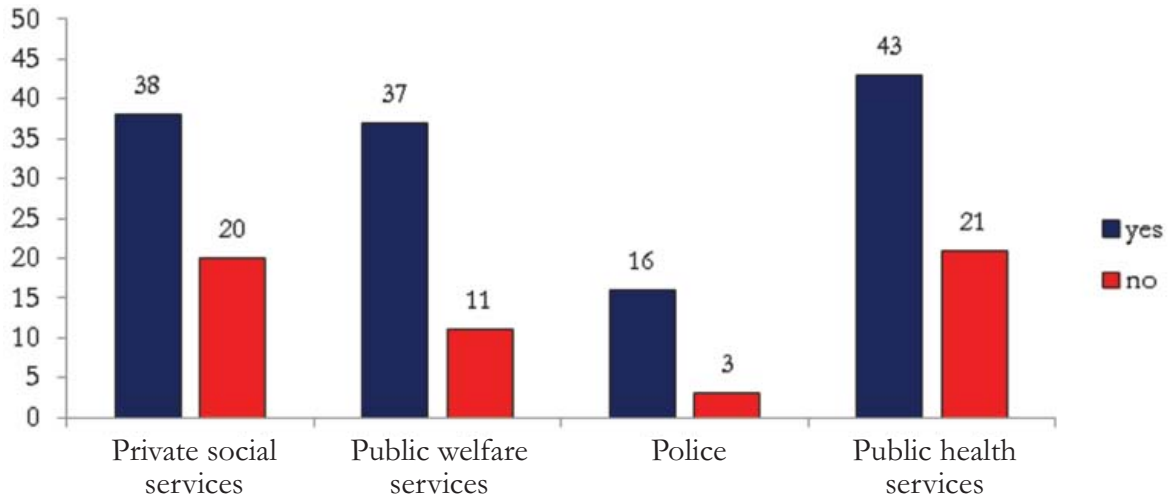
The Services involved are much less likely to have, as users, refugee women (only 3% of respondents declared to have "a lot" of refugee, while 40% said to have "none" of them), asylum seekers (3% of "a lot", 45% of "none"), or "ethnic minority" women (23% "a lot", 27% "none"). Only one person (a police officer) declared to have any MRM woman among its everyday work "clients".

## **Demands to the Services and Services' Demands**

Professionals consider the social basic needs of "housing" (23% of valid), "economic support" (20% of valid) and "job placement" (20% of valid) as the most difficult demands to meet, also in services who are not usually devoted to this kind of demands. Poverty and social disadvantage, also related to the economic crisis, are therefore very visible from their standpoint.

Considering an intercultural context, professionals were asked whether they were aware of cases of MRM women asking to be attended/assisted by a

Figure 2: Perception of VAW increasing into different services. Frequencies and percentages on overall sample



woman. Only 27% of professionals answered in affirmative terms. 92% of them (who said “yes”) think that this type of request should be met.

Only 23% of the professionals involved have been trained on VAW over the last three years. The percentage is lower among local welfare authorities such as police and public social services (16% each).

It must be considered that the low self-selection of the sample can be related to this result.

About topics that professionals in Padua’s context consider more important to achieve a basic training on VAW and MRM women, prevailed those referred to normative framework: “national and EU legislation regarding MREM rights and status in relation to VAW issues” (19%), “national legislation, EU, European Council and International Institutions Documents relating to VAW” (18%). Only as the third option “VAW effect on women’s health” (14%). This result shows the general preference of respondents for topics related to everyday practices, but also a surprisingly lack of normative orientation, a sort of “anomy” experienced by professionals in respect with the legal frames they are operating within.

Among VAW typologies that professionals consider important to be trained on are: “domestic/family violence” (40%, by large the most common choice) followed by “psychological violence” (10%).

The “anomic” aspect, and the consequent requests of pragmatic indication for everyday action, is evident also by the preferences regarding the most effective patterns to face VAW: “shared protocols” (36% of valid values) and “common guidelines” (23% of valid) are in Padua’s context preferred to items referring to “networks” of public/private service experts (12%), managed by natives and MREM women (16%), or coordinated by women from different backgrounds (12%).

## Risks of Violence, Definitions of Violence

Among professionals there is also a widespread perception of VAW increase (71%). This perception is particularly strong among police officers (84%). Those born from 1981 onwards are less pessimistic: only 55% thinks that violence has increased.

The majority of the professionals (67%) believe also that VAW is more visible than in the past, primarily because “mass media talk more about VAW” (83% agree, 29% “totally”), and “women report more about violence” (78% agree, 18% “totally”), but also because “institutions are engaged in campaigns against VAW” (65% agree, 11% “totally”). It seems that professionals recognize a positive change in the public discourse: VAW is more present in public debate, but concrete actions are still unsatisfactory.

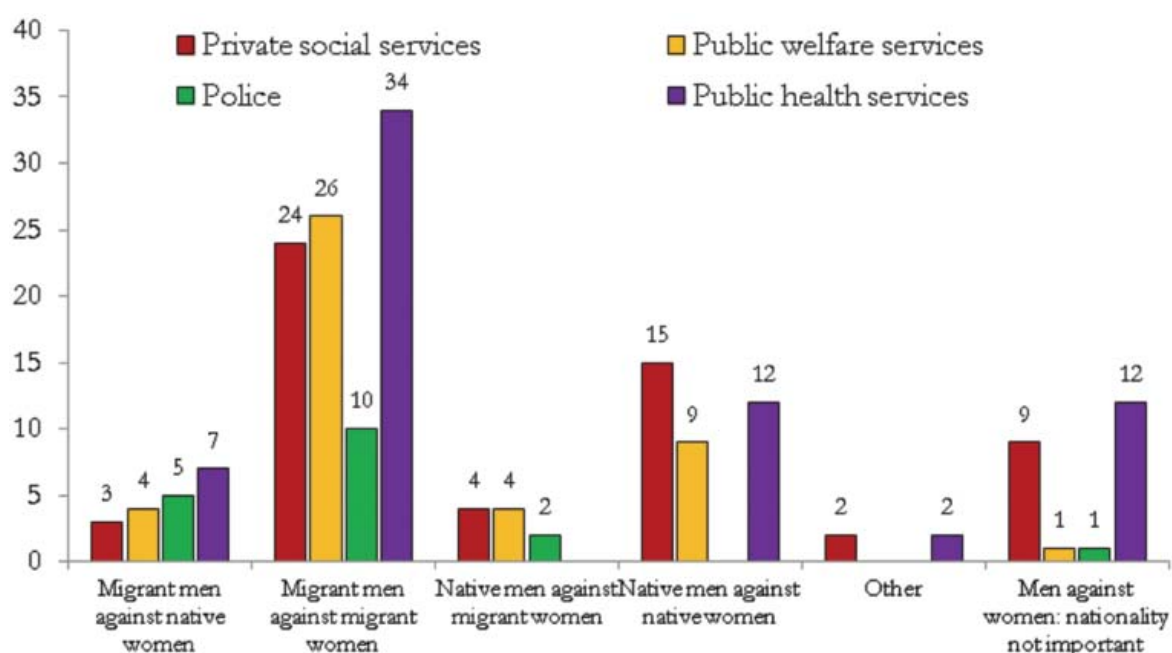
We asked to professionals what they think are the most frequent acts of violence in relation to the migration and intercultural context, meaning the presence of natives and migrants as victims and authors.

Italian professionals consider VAW to be much more frequently perpetrated by “migrant men against migrant women” (50% as first choice and 31% as second choice) and then by “native men against native women” (19% as first and 40% as second choice).

Service professionals consider violence existing in all communities, but in migrant communities more than in native community. Violence is not perceived as significantly crossing the virtual borders of communities: “native against migrant” and “migrant against native” are much less chosen options.

Although it is not clear whether the perception is related to relative or absolute VAW rates, the perception of migrants as much more prone to VAW

Figure 3: Perception of VAW in migration context among services





(both as victims and perpetrators) can be read as a possible overestimation of migrants' VAW, considering the available data at national and local level.

Moreover, the perception was considered in their services, who are the most engaged in social disadvantage situations, where migrants are relatively more present.

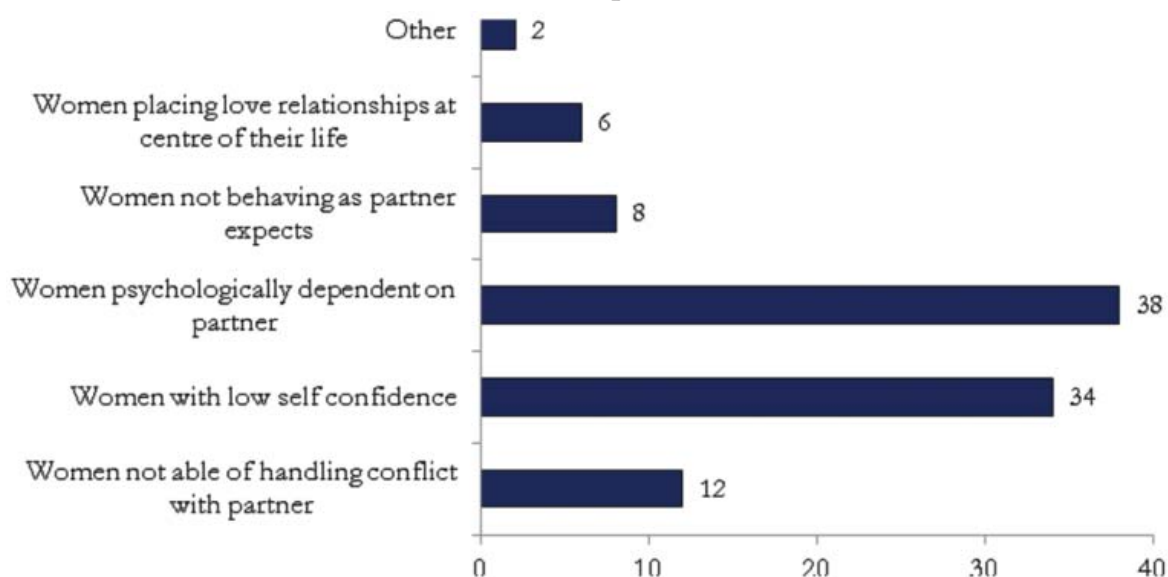
About the typologies and situations relating to VAW and their diffusion, professionals chose "domestic violence" as the most widespread (59%) typology of VAW. "Domestic violence" is also considered the most dangerous type of VAW for society (49%). Other dangerous kinds of VAW, but less highlighted, are: "marginalization of women in decision making places" (13%) and "trafficking of women and forced prostitution" (8%).

Regarding the explanation of VAW, professionals consider "society support men's supremacy" (27%) as the best definition to explain the diffusion of VAW in society. This could be defined as "common sense feminist" understanding and is more easily expressed by women than by men. More specific statements that stand out are: "men consider natural that women are dependent" (14%), and "women's autonomy and reproductive rights not acceptable to their partners" (14%).

Two different questions were addressed to consider which kinds of women are more at risk of VAW in intimate relationship, respectively regarding individual characteristics and social situations.

The controversial question on women's profiles gave unexpected results: "women psychologically dependent of partner" (38%) and "women with low self-confidence" (34%) were the most chosen statements, whereas "women not behaving as partner expects" (8%) received very few preferences. We can interpret this result as a description of women's "weakness" in its ambivalent signifi-

Figure 4: Perception of risk of VAW for women in a relationship. Percentages on overall sample



cance. Even if masculine domination is generally recognized in other responses, this result put a different point. In other words, “low self-confidence” and “psychological dependence” could be considered as the elements that expose women to “symbolic violence”.

The psychological labelling of victims made clear the risk of “second victimization”: the “blaming the victim” attitude against victims of violence. We are aware that the question was itself “essentialist” about women, describing them as victims and reified in fixed characteristics.

About the situations that are able to increase the risks of VAW in heterosexual relationships, professionals think that “lacking of social networks” (37%) is the most dangerous, followed by “economic dependency” (19%) and “living in multi-problematic families” (19%).

Coming to potential perpetrators of violence, men are considered more likely to commit VAW when they live in social context where “gender inequality is considered a social rule” (25%), when they are “alcohol or drug addicted” (19%) and when they are “predisposed to violent behaviour” (19%). Those items express a mix of cultural and psycho-biological sets of explanations that should be considered in the natives-migrants dialectics in order to be more deeply interpreted (e.g. when a cultural explanation is preferred? When the psycho-biological elements are considered more salient?). It is also important whether some interpretations risk to “naturalize” violence making perpetrators less and victims more responsible for violence. A risk that emerges also from the broad agreement with statements such as: “In the modern equalitarian society women and men share the same social responsibility for their violent relationships” (58% agree, 26% “totally”); “Women are able to use the same violence than men, especially in their intimate relationships” (52% agree, 13% “totally”). This dimension is explored in the next paragraph.

## **Gender and “Capacity” to Commit Violence**

In this section we consider the results of five items related to the consideration of gendered social habitus with respect to the capacity to use violence. As just mentioned, slightly more than half of respondents agree with the statement that considers women as much able as men to use violence in intimate relationships, without significant differences between the two subsamples by gender.

Among the services, the local police agree more with this statement than the others (61%), while, on the contrary, the health professionals are the only group of respondents where disagreement prevails (46%).

The statement that it is the habit of caring that could explain the lower inclination of women to violence is rejected by the majority (44% agree). In this case women are more likely to agree (46% W, 38% M). Professionals that stand out are local police officers, only 22% agree: they are the most convinced supporters of a substantial “gender equality” in the capacities to use violence.

The majority of professionals also believe that men and women have the same responsibility for their abusive relationships (58% of valid cases), and this is the case especially among men (64% M, 56% W).

Moreover professionals do not think that structural gender asymmetry of power brings to a generalized risk of violence for all the women (60% disagree with this hypothesis, considering valid cases).

At least, respondents express a strong disagreement (22% the rate of agreement, considering only valid) with the statement that men and women generally suffer the same risk of violence from partners.

The passage from general statements, as the last, where a “feminist common sense” prevails, to more specific statements, where a more gender-neutral approach is widespread, constitute a critical point to be investigated in order to understand whether there’s the risk of “blaming the victim” attitude.

## **Family Formation Models and Risk of VAW**

In this part we take into account the agreement / disagreement with some statements subject to significant debate in a context of migration and intercultural relations, with respect to issues of family and relationship formation socially and culturally desirable.

Professionals of local services mostly agree on considering forced marriages as a “consequence of the custom of arranged marriages” (72% of valid values). It’s not clear which meaning is given to “consequence”: the “arrangement” is considered a sufficient condition to define the marriage as “forced”? In any case, here we find our first possible controversial aspect with respect to different practices of family formation in a cross-cultural debate.

The controversial aspect is much clearer in the statement that conceives the “arranged marriage” as a social violence that affects mainly women, even when they agree: a statement that collects 89% (considering only valid values) of agreement. This consensus, which can be attributed to an understanding of the phenomenon of arranged marriages as inscribed in the patriarchal order, becomes a more complex issue when considered in a context where this family formation typology is recognized, widespread and legitimate among some of the MRM women users of the services. The recognition, by professionals, of a kind of “symbolic violence” that regards mainly migrants, could possibly bring to a “stigma” effect on migrant users, considered culturally “backward” and treated, consequently, with forms of institutional paternalism that risk to reproduce a neo-colonial approach into our society and welfare system.

The statement that relates the socially recognized right for husbands / partners “to claim a sexual intercourse” to the risk of sexual and intimate violence for women is generally accepted (83% of valid, 47% “totally”). Women agree more than men (W: 84%; M: 80%), while among service sectors only the local

police present a lower agreement (70% of valid cases), compared to an average of 83-85% agreement within the other groups.

“Jealousy” is also recognized as a potential risk factor for violence in a couple. Women agree significantly more than men: 71% compared to 54%. Into Ngo’ and associations the gender gap is even larger (W: 81% women; M: 46%). The lower overall agreement is among public local authorities and police, where 62% of women and 43% of men agree with this statement.

Significant consensus (78% of valid values) in considering as forms of social violence the prohibition of marriage for homosexuals or the lack of rights for same-sex couples. This “liberal” attitude is prevalent, albeit with different percentages, among gender subsamples and among all services. This majority is very significant if we consider that same-sex marriages are not allowed by the Italian law.

### **Risk of Violence for MRM Women**

Service professionals generally recognize a greater risk of violence for migrant women (as we already observed in the question on types of gender violence in intercultural context), with some ambiguities and not always as much as one would expect.

The majority of the sample agree (59%, but only 9% “totally”), with the statement considering MRM women as suffering more than native women for harassment in the workplace. Only among local police disagreement is prevailing (41% of agreement). Among other sectors the agreement, although in variable degrees, is generally prevailing.

Similar results for the recognition of “economic violence” on migrant women, expressed in an item the claims that highly educated migrants being forced to accept low-level jobs are subject to a form of social violence. The recognition of this form of social discrimination is rather broad in all sectors (between 73-83%) but police (35% of agreement).

Also the claim that migrant women legal status and the administrative rules could bring to risk of violence for women obtained a somehow similar result: services generally agree (53-61%) but police (18%). This result is overlapping with gender differences: 58% (valid cases) the agreement among women, 37% among men.

The overall sample is split almost in half on family reunification rules and risk of VAW. Observing differences among service sectors, it emerges how all service sectors (40-48% of agreement) except for public health services (58% of agreement) do not consider legal frames related to family reunification as factors of women vulnerability. This is an important issue, considering the special remarks made by the UN Rapporteur (Manjoo 2012) about Italian regulations, that tighten the condition of dependency of re-joined women to the husband, in terms of their legal stay in the country, even when the relationship happen to be violent or oppressive.

Very broad agreement on considering practices that restrict mobility outside home for women family members as increasing the risk of VAW, without significant variations between genders and sectors of the respondents. Finally, the obligation to learn Italian, albeit expressed in ambiguous terms (what does “obligation” mean: to take part in courses, or to overcome linguistic exams?) collects a broad consensus (67% valid cases).

Vulnerability is more strongly and generally recognized if associated to “lack of integration” of migrants in the “rights” they should be able to achieve (language is considered the sine qua non condition for integration), than with respect to their status in a multi-layered citizenship society. Police officers in particular seem very far from recognizing the social vulnerability of migrant women.

### Social Constructions of “Honour” for Men and Women in Relation to VAW Risks

We tried to explore the ambivalence of some concepts such as “honour” or “dignity” in their social meaning and use, in relation to “honour killing”.

Table 3: Main results regarding statements about VAW

	Totally agree	Somehow agree	Somehow disagree	Totally disagree	Missing
<b>Family forms and VAW:</b>					
1. Forced-marriages are a direct consequence of the arranged marriage custom	18% (19%)	50% (53%)	24% (25%)	3% (4%)	5%
2. Family arranged-marriage is a type of social violence affecting mostly women, even when women consent to it	43% (44%)	44% (45%)	10% (10%)	1% (1%)	2%
3. Prohibiting same-sex marriages is a form of social violence	35% (37%)	39% (41%)	14% (14%)	8% (8%)	3%
<b>MREM women and risks of VAW:</b>					
1. MREM women are more vulnerable to VAW because of their legal status and administrative rules	17% (18%)	34% (35%)	33% (35%)	12% (12%)	4%
2. MREM women coming through family reunification dispose to violence more often because of their status	13% (13%)	34% (36%)	36% (39%)	12% (12%)	5%
3. Rules obliging MREM people to learn host country’s language make women less vulnerable to VAW	31% (31%)	35% (36%)	23% (23%)	9% (10%)	2%

	Totally agree	Somehow agree	Somehow disagree	Totally disagree	Missing
<b>Limits of body regulation in public spaces:</b>					
1. When it is her choice, hampering a woman to veil herself is social	29% (30%)	49% (50%)	14% (14%)	6% (6%)	2%
2. Laws prohibiting burqa constitute social violence	8% (8%)	25% (26%)	41% (43%)	22% (23%)	4%
3. Having a separate swimming pool for women could be accepted for cultural rights and to protect women's privacy	1% (1%)	18% (19%)	29% (30%)	48% (50%)	4%
<b>Gender and violence risks:</b>					
1. Women and men have the same risks of suffering from their partner's violent behaviour	2% (2%)	20% (21%)	46% (48%)	28% (29%)	4%
2. Women are able to use the same amount of violence as men, especially in intimate relationships	13% (14%)	37% (38%)	38% (39%)	9% (9%)	3%
3. In modern egalitarian society women and men share the same responsibility for their violent relationships	25% (26%)	32% (33%)	34% (35%)	6% (6%)	3%
<b>Prostitution and VAW:</b>					
1. Even as a personal choice, prostitution is a type of VAW	34% (35%)	33% (33%)	18% (19%)	13% (13%)	2%
2. Prohibiting voluntary prostitution is a form of VAW	4% (5%)	20% (21%)	37% (38%)	34% (36%)	5%
<b>"Honour" and VAW:</b>					
1. In all societies sense of honour is important for people's personal self-esteem"	22% (24%)	32% (35%)	28% (31%)	10% (10%)	8%
2. The social relevance of honour entails risks of VAW	15% (15%)	43% (45%)	30% (32%)	7% (8%)	5%

The majority of the sample disagrees with the equivalence between the traditional meaning of "honour" and the modern term "dignity", although men tend to agree more (51%) than women (36%). However, analysing the results among sectors, it emerges the ambivalence of the interpretations. It's possible that these

results (both by gender, and sectors) are due to two different ways of conceiving the couple honour/dignity, especially whether, to the word “honour”, is given a positive or negative connotation.

Four-fifths of the sample disagree (79% valid cases) and recognize male control of family honour as opposite to gender equality. Women agree (84%) more often than men (65%). Among the services, local police officers are less likely to agree than the others (50%), while in private social services (Ngo’s and associations) the agreement is pretty widespread (88%). That’s a clear indication of the different meanings given to the term honour (more positive for the police, more negative for associations). When referred to “self-respect of men and women”, “honour” is generally evaluated in positive terms (59% agree with considering it important in all society). The men agree more (62%) than women (57%) with this representation.

The agreement is prevailing among women but not among men with the statement that the importance of the honour of men and women in society involves substantial risk of violence for women (overall sample: 60% of agreement; 64% W; 48% M): a rather contradictory result compared to the previous one. Again, results can be interpreted as related to the evaluation in more positive, negative or cautious terms of the social meaning of the word “honour.”

Turning to “honour” specifically related to the intercultural context: the majority disagree with the statement that “honour killing” is a term used to discriminate against certain groups of migrants in describing certain types of violence (31% of agreement among valid values). This statement presents also a higher rate of non-responses (10%).

Finally, the vast majority disagrees with the statement that “honour killings” concern only Muslim women. Even though 87% disagree. It is interesting to point out the differences among the various services: private associations/Ngo’s and public social services have “only” 8% of the agreement, while the local police (22%) and health services (17%) are much more likely to agree. Considering this statement as heavily stigmatizing “Muslim culture” in essentialist terms, and given the frequent murders by partners or ex-partners in the last years and months (also covered by media), the percentage of agreement is to be considered significant.

## **Regulation of Bodies in the Public Sphere**

Here we consider the position of professionals with respect to the regulation of legitimate and non-hegemonic uses of bodies in public spaces.

There is large agreement in considering a form of social violence the forced impediment, for a woman, to cover her head and body (80% of valid values). Agreement is larger among women (82%, only valid) than among men (72%). This gender gap can be attributed to differences between sectors aligned gradually from a virtually complete agreement to a less strong, but still prevalent,

agreement: 90% among Ngo's and association, 85% among public social services, 72% among health services, 61% among local police officers.

Considering a more specific statement that refers to burqa prohibition by law as a form of social violence, agreement drops to 34% (of valid values). On this second statement the services differ in an important way: Ngo's, associations and public social services are more likely to agree (around 47-48%), while local police (22%) and health services (19%) are clearly more prone to disagree. Confronting these two results, on the one hand we can draw the line of what is considered the "acceptable Islam" and, on the other, we could argue that passing from general statement to more specific ones, the attitude towards the non-hegemonic practices of the body finds a greater legitimacy of prohibition by law.

Finally, the statement that refers to the possibility of having separate swimming pools by gender as a way to protect cultural rights and women's privacy, female gets only 21% of agreement. There are not substantial differences either by gender, or by type of service. Here it is possible to trace another dimension of an hegemonic discourse, a "taken for granted" that does not justify the recognition of cultural differences to "shape" the use of public spaces (through the naturalization of "our" cultural horizon), even if these considerations go far beyond the possibilities of interpretation provided by this item, considering swimming pools as a rather peculiar public place.

## **Prostitution and VAW**

In the debate on prostitution (or "sex work") it is possible to distinguish different approaches also into feminist debate: synthesizing the many and different positions, we could trace one pole of interpretation that tends to see prostitution, even when voluntary, as a form of institutionalized exchange that re-produce the structural dominion of men, the "users", on women, who are "traded". A quite opposite interpretation, ask for the recognition of "sex work" as a decent job, as any other form of workforce and body capacities selling on the labour market, not necessarily stigmatizing, but often more profitable and therefore able to empower women (or men), who choose this occupation without being forced.

The majority of professionals, men and women, considers prostitution as a form of violence against women (67% agree, 35% "totally agree"), even when it is freely chosen.

In this case, age of respondents holds a certain importance: the older the respondent the more likely he or she agrees with considering also voluntary prostitution as a form VAW. At the extreme poles: 74% of respondents born before 1960 agree, while only 56% of respondents born from 1981 onwards agree. This relationship between age and agreement is clearer among men, while it is less evident among women. It emerges a largely negative view towards sex work, which is considered a form of violence against women, even when it is freely chosen.



This result is confirmed by the very large disagreement expressed by respondents with the statement that suggests that prostitution, if freely chosen, may be able to increase the power of women (8% of agreement, considering only valid).

A different and not obvious consequent result regards the agreement with considering the prohibition by law of free choice prostitution as a form of social violence (only 26% of agreement among valid values).

Men agree generally more than women (32% compared to 24%). This result is very interesting because it describes a limit of acceptability of normative regulation by the State of body's uses, a limit that seems rather shared between professionals of services. Moreover, it should be considered that under the Italian regulation prostitution itself is legal, and only organized prostitution is subject to criminal prosecution.

Finally, the claim that "misery" is the main cause that drives women into prostitution collects a majority of agreement (68%, only valid), with no significant differences among genders. Among sectors, police officers are the only group that mainly disagrees (39% of agreement). Although not statistically significant, it is interesting to note that, among police officers, women are the least likely to agree compared to any other group of respondents (16%, valid only). Police officers responses police are rather relevant, given their everyday work facing the exploitation of prostitution. The downside of the former statements wording, is that they require that the respondent would admit a real "free choice" in prostitution, a condition that cannot be taken for granted in the respondents social representation of the phenomenon.

The ambiguity between a negative approach to sex work, because it constitutes a form of VAW, and the stigmatizations of prostitutes, it would be an important topic to explore further.

## 2.3. Conclusion

In the Italian context, violence against women is considered to be more visible and more widespread than in the past according to the service operators interviewed, and domestic violence/family is recognized as the main area of concern. In addition to the risk of violence in family contexts characterized by an asymmetry of power and unequal distribution of care work, the survey detected concerns regarding persisting forms of gender inequality and sexism in the public sphere, particularly referred to the marginalization of women from where decisions are made, and harassment/mobbing at work. A third concern is about the exploitation and trade of women's bodies, especially with respect to the phenomenon of trafficking and prostitution.

These three main aspects of VAW: domestic violence, public/work discriminations, and trade of women's bodies, with the predominance of the first aspect,

are perceived as the most widespread and dangerous for society. Violence is described mainly in terms of psychological and sexual abuse.

The domestic/family violence is also the topic about which professionals would like to receive specific training. From this “objective” account of the phenomenon comes the problem of interaction between family contexts and institutions, especially considering an intercultural society characterized by the presence of different couple and family favourite models, in part not socially recognized nor considered.

Professionals proved to be aware of structural violence against women in a society that “supports male supremacy”. At a general level, the VAW phenomenon is clearly interpreted by the services in terms of “common sense” feminism or gender-friendly understanding.

Some critical points must also be highlighted: the first concerns the passage from general abstract statements to more pragmatic categories of definition, possibly used in everyday practices. In some cases, at a “micro” level, respondents contradict what is recognized at the macro level. The risk, considering a professionals/users relation, is to run into forms of “secondary victimization” against people who are victims of violence, especially when they choose to stay in a potentially violent relationship. This risk, considering the widespread social perceptions, may relate in particular to migrant women, who may be stereotyped as “victims” in terms of cultural habits, for the social environment they live in, or for their alleged psychological traits.

The second critical point refers to the normative boundaries of acceptable practices. It should be noted a broad “liberal” consensus on “mainstream” women’s and LGBT rights, while professionals seem to be much less sensitive to other forms of recognition concerning non-hegemonic practices variously widespread among migrants (e.g. arranged marriage as not necessarily considerable as “forced”).

The risk is that, in the hegemonic public and political discourse, but also in the practices of the services, particular gender “sensitivity” could work and be used in order to discriminate migrants.

The survey shows the legitimate limits of women’s body regulations by the law. In the opinion of the majority of the respondents, on the one hand the burqa but not the veil, on the other hand voluntary prostitution, can be legally regulated by state law. Prostitution is considered by the majority in very negative terms, and is considered a form of social violence against women even when it is voluntary.

In sum, the discourse on VAW that seems to emerge from the data seems to rest on the idea that we are in a modern and egalitarian society where the areas of “backwardness”, related to “our” violence against women, are attributed to situations of social and psychological or cultural disadvantage. The social, symbolic and cultural violence implemented by the society at structural level is recognized only at an abstract level.

For example, this is related to the still weak recognition of MRM women structural conditions of vulnerability, both economically, socially, and in some cases for their residence status, which often makes them socially unable to seek forms of aid when victims of violence. Moreover they can be “stigmatized” and stereotyped in order to explain why they are victims of violence (“blaming the victim” attitude).

“Non-hegemonic” practices and discourses, although questionable and controversial, risk to be reduced misleadingly to social/cultural backwardness (e.g. the practice of arranged marriages, or the choice of covering the body or the head, when “freely” chosen).

Regarding the public debate that emerges in Padua’s context, the risk is that “difference” emerges only as “essentializing” category with a clear distinction between natives, generally considered as going toward more modern and egalitarian gender relations, and “them”, racialized and stereotyped, considered backward and inertial, or “accepted” only in “humanitarian” terms. The effect is that their discourses/practices are implicitly placed outside the boundaries of the “hegemonic” public and democratic debate, reproducing also their symbolic inferiority in the society.

Regarding the operative aspects, the risk of assuming only one model of empowerment and gender relations could run into paternalistic relations among professionals/users, making the encounter with the services a meeting of mutual stereotyping, although with uneven symbolic effectiveness.

It seems very important to develop projects as *SPEAK OUT!* where it is possible to produce a reflection on the reciprocal stereotypes with the aim to overcome them within the practices against gender based violence.

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## 2.4. Results from Focus Groups

### Objectives and methodology

The activities of Preliminary Research foresaw the implementation of three Focus groups that aimed at investigating the different ways to name and to define VAW and at comparing different meanings that violence can assume in migrant and native women. The Italian team organized four focus group between June and October 2011. Only women took part at the meetings. The first meeting involved a group of women professionals, who work in social and health services and associations in Padua. At the second focus group took part a group of migrant women. Women professionals working in “Opera Nomadi” took part at the third meeting, (“Opera Nomadi” is an association that deals with Roma people), and both professionals and migrant women took part at the fourth focus group.

The focus groups took place at the University of Padua, Philosophy, Sociology, Education and Applied Psychology Department and they lasted around two hours each. Franca Bimbi moderated over the discussions with the contribution of Francesca Alice Vianello.

The guidelines for the focus groups were built on the experiences of previous researches about violence against women and the scientific literature national and international about the subject.

We used some items of the survey during the first, second and third focus groups. Questions were connected to the most widespread types of violence existing in Italy and the most dangerous for society, the reason for the diffusion of violence and which women are more at risk to suffer violence.

We changed method in the fourth focus group and we suggested women 11 items on controversial issues concerning arranged marriage, homosexual marriage, honour crimes, abortion, accessibility to the contraceptive device, veil and burqa, prostitution, family reunification etc. Women had to express their views on some of the statements they prefer.

Table 4: Focus groups in Italy

First focus group 06.22. 2011	Women professionals (both native Italian and of migrant origin) working in social and health services, associations and NGOs in the territory of Padua	The group was formed by 7 women; three of them are of migrant origin, coming from Albania and Rwanda.
Second focus group 07.22. 2011	Migrant women living in Padua	The group was made up of 5 migrant women, coming from Moldavia, Romania, Ukraine and Morocco.
Third focus group	Women professionals working with Roma people.	The group was formed by 6 native Italian women.
Fourth focus group 10.05.2011	Women professionals (both native Italian and of migrant origin) + Migrant women	The group was formed by 7 women, who have taken part in the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> focus groups. Five women are of migrant origin, coming from Rwanda, Albania and Romania.

### Focus Group with Women Professionals

Seven women professionals took part at the first meeting, they worked in different services and associations that deal with migrant, refugee and ethnic minority women in Padua, some of them were migrants. Women introduced themselves and their job, then we began to discuss about violence against women using some items of the survey.

Professionals discussed about situations and types of violence against women met in their everyday work experience; the types of violence discussed by them reflected their professional specialization and the characteristics of the service or association they work for.

In the discussion participants highlighted some types of institutional violence against women and they stressed how institutional violence is very often acted implicitly at the general as well as at the individual level. Professionals considered that this kind of violence doesn't make feel women supported and sustained from institutions and this circumstance constitutes a difficulty to escape from violence.

Some participants talked about secondary victimization, which can be occurred in the institutions/services.

*Recently I worked with two migrant women, I think they came from Morocco. They were victims of violence and they denounced their husband, so we began a protection path and they moved in a protected community house, but then they retracted their denounces because living in the community were shameful for them and moreover they felt isolation (Italian social worker at social service of the city)*

Professionals noticed that, in their experience, migrant women have more difficulties to identify violence than Italian women. As a Rwandese professional in a community for victims of trafficking told us: «*I understood that women I'm working with in these days are not aware about violence*». Professionals think that migrant women are more vulnerable than Italian women.

*It's difficult with Italian women, but it is surely more difficult to support migrant women along a path to safe and independent life* (Italian psychologist at anti-violence centre).

One professional affirmed that migrant women are more vulnerable, because in their culture there are rules which pose women in subordination respect to men.

*I see that in migrant women, because they grew up with those rules. When migrant women arrived in Italy, some of them want to rebel to those schemas. When they begin to rebel, there start violence: they are beaten, they are shut at home, if they work they are obliged to give their pay to the husband* (Rwandese professional in a community for victims of trafficking).

Other professionals considered that all women are exposed to violence in the same way, because there exist a gender inequality that is fixed in the organization of society. A social worker at the hospital stated:

*in my opinion all women are exposed to violence, because in a so unequal society and world all women risk suffering violence.*

She underlines the importance to consider both women's exposition to the multiplicity form of gender violence and the social sufferance presents in our society depending by different form of social exclusion. Only by considering all the range of pain caused to people by the social exclusion, it is possible to focus on the interpersonal violent relations where women are especially exposed to the men's aggressive behaviour. The group discussion was involved equally on the individual cases relating to the professional experiences and on the general framework of gender based violence.

At the end of the focus group, participants expressed some words and statements to define violence against women. They used these words: "subjection", "supremacy", "control". They specified that "control" can be acted by a husband/partner or other relatives, but also by the community, institutions and it can be physical or psychological coercion.

## Focus Group with Migrant Women

The second focus group involved migrant women from Romania, Morocco, Ukraine and Moldova. They live in Padua, but they did not know each other. Franca Bimbi introduced *SPEAK OUT!* project and the objective of the focus group, and then participants introduced themselves.

The discussion began by analysing some items of the questionnaire. Participants started reflecting about gender inequality in their origin country and in Italy and about the gender roles in the organization of society. Comprehension of familiar violence or intimate violence was related to the existence of patterns and social rules.

Romanian health and social worker: *I grew up in seventies with Ceaușescu... I think it was right, because I grew up in that way. I don't know if it was right or wrong the respect for parents, for elder people.*

Moldovan student: *To live in a society where everybody... especially men impose women to stay at home with children. (...) you think is a normal way of life. Women there (in Moldova) are happy, because they think is normal to live in that way.*

Participants reflected about differences between their country of origin and Italy and they expressed opposite points of view. Two women think that the situation of women in Italy is much better than in their origin country.

*Here in Italy women suffered less violence than in my country, because it's true men are different, but women here want to work, to study, they do not want to rest with men (Moldovan student).*

Other participants considered that gender inequality exists everywhere and inequality depends on characteristics of women and by they will:

*The Italian society more open... no, I do not believe it... It depends on the relationship between man and woman. Women remain always in a low position related to men; maybe they think is a way to be respectful, so I think that depend on women to overcome this limit (Moroccan student).*

Participants discussed about domestic violence, intimate violence and they stressed that perpetrators of violence are not only husbands or partners, but also other relatives as mothers, mothers-in-law, or other women members of the same community.

*A friend of mine suffered violence from her husband and when she talked with her mother about this, her mother said that it was normal (Moroccan student).*

Participants discussed also about types of violence, in particular about institutional violence:

*It exists a taboo in the society, there's a lack of training in the professionals or maybe it lacks the will to understand the new dynamics (Ukrainian cultural mediator).*

Participants stressed how it is more difficult for migrant women to get in touch with institutions and services. Regarding situations that expose women to the risk of suffering violence, migrant women considered more at risk women that depend on their husband/partner economically and women that do not have a social, family and community network.

### **Focus Group with Women Working with Roma People**

The third group was made up of six native Italian professional women, collaborating with Padua's Opera Nomadi, a particular NGO taking care of Roma people questions. All participants knew each other and we noted that this homogeneity facilitated the discussion and the in-depth examination of the topics.

Much of discussion was focused on types of violence that Roma women were likely to suffer; professionals distinguished different practices between different groups living in the territory of Padua, and specified that these differences also depending on the countries they come from.

In general, professionals recognized that Roma and Sinti women are exposed to many forms of violence acted by partners. Professionals expressed their understanding of familiar violence or intimate violence, relating to the existence of patriarchal norms that legitimize forms of control over women autonomy and many kinds of violence against them.

*Opera Nomadi President: The problem is that we come in contact with people who have a different conception of violence ... violence is part of the culture. It's culture.*

*Opera Nomadi professional: It's much complicated to keep in contact with these women, because of the man image with his authority is strongly present.*

In the description of the patriarchal dynamics involved in these communities, professionals named some violent practices perpetrated against women, such as intimate violence, physical coercion, negation of right to abortion, lack in sexual and reproductive health care and arranged and forced marriages.

Symbolic violence also emerged the, because men's superiority is accepted by women. Some professionals reflected in particular on the fact that for these women is extremely difficult to recognize and identified the forms of violence they suffer: some behaviors seem to be "normal" to them.



Opera Nomadi President: *At the beginning, women said us that we are wrong and they are in agreement with this pattern; they want to hand it on their daughters.*

Opera Nomadi professional: *Because of some cultural aspects, it's also improbable the community women justify if other women rise up and escape.*

Institutional violence against Roma and Sinti women was the central point of the second part of the discussion. Professional woman, with many examples from their personal experience, highlighted the inadequate training of the services in order to understand and deal with Roma and Sinti cultures, health services in particular.

Professional women underlined the importance of the role of the cultural mediators because they know how and are able to establish a trust relationship with Roma and Sinti women, understanding their needs and accompanying them in the difficult relationship to the services.

### **Professionals from the Local Welfare System Compared with Migrant Women**

The last focus group was a “mixed” focus, involving both women professionals and migrant women. There were seven women, five of them were migrant women, coming from three different countries, Rwanda, Albania and Romania.

For this group, a different line of conduction was used: we distributed a paper with eleven topics, taken out from the questionnaire on VAW, and invited women to choose that/those they wanted to comment upon and express their agreement/disagreement. It was a further occasion, for the researchers and for the women too, to explore and share the different perspectives that could exist on the same controversial issues about VAW.

The discussion developed wasn't on all the topics we proposed: women focused their attention just on some topics concerning VAW in the family arranged-marriages, the sense of honour, the acceptance of low-level jobs for migrant women and family reunification.

As a first step, professionals both native Italian and of migrant origin expressed some comments on this topic: if women are more exposed to intimate partner violence in love marriages than in family arranged-marriages. A native Italian professional seemed to agree with this statement. On this question, professionals of migrant origin (especially from Albania) said that in some cultures the control exerted on women decisions by the family is perceived as a form of protection and not as a violence against women. They also stressed that it's extremely difficult for women, coming from some specific cultures, to recognize violence, including in arranged-marriages, because of the cultural and social rules in the country of origin.

The second point debated was on the sense of honour: women reflected on the meaning of honour in the organization of the society and on the differences between their countries of origin and Italy.

Especially migrant women talked about the topic concerning educational qualifications and low-level jobs for migrant women. Some of them talked about it as a *consimți* violence (in Rumanian language means “with consent”): this expression “the allowed violence” was used in this focus group to indicate the self-debasement using for accepting a low level work. Especially more adult women recognised the difference between the use of the compliance for negotiating on their subaltern position and the acceptance of it.

## 2.5. Final Remarks

The preliminary research carried out through the questionnaire and the focus groups was very important to identify the necessity of a concrete development of an anti-violence network in the Padua’s territory.

The survey highlighted mainly three aspects: the need of in-depth trainings about VAW issues, the need of a reflexive approach on ethnocentrism that characterizes the implicit approach on the cultural differences present in the territory, the need to create occasions where migrant women and professionals could understand the reciprocal point of view relating to the caring demands.

As some items of the questionnaire could very far from practical cases especially in health services, we could consider the ethnocentrism as a general attitude with a specific typology of users: the immigrants, more than a real point of view on gender, migration and VAW. The increasing possibility to meet MRM women working on VAW with a good preparation could represent for professionals a way to change some unfriendly attitudes with migrants.

Focus groups stressed a different complexity related to the approach on VAW by professionals, volunteers and MRM women. The discussion dealt mainly with cases and general perceptions referred to real experiences. We could affirm that some professionals and volunteers handle VAW with a victimization point of view rather than a resolving point of view. Professionals assert that the weakness of local networks compromises their ability to give effective answers. Some cultural mediators, who work daily with refugees and asylum seekers, appear discouraged from the weakness of their users. The focus groups highlighted some dramatic needs: the development of networks between gender friendly professionals, the development of migrant networks able to support prevention and way out from violence paths, the implementation of the public resources devoted to contrast violence against women.

The specific theme of Roma and Sinti women underlined the limits of the mediation work and its difficulties to propose a peer-to-peer path.

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## SOCIAL INDICATORS

### Migrants and People with Migrant Origin and VAW in the Project's Territory

#### Migrant People in Italy, Veneto Region and Padua

At the 1st January 2011, there were 4.570.317 non-Italian residents in Italy, 7,5% of the total number of resident; Romanian citizens represent the largest community (21,2% of the total). In the Veneto Region there are 504.677 non-Italian residents, 253.563 are women and 251.114 are men.

In the entire province of Padua the total number of non-Italian citizens reaches 91.649 (9,8% of the resident population), in which the women again outnumber the men (46.901 to 44.748). Romanian citizens represent the largest community (for 30,4% of the total number of non-Italians), followed by Moroccans (11,6%), and Moldavians (11,5%). In the city of Padua there are 30.933 non-Italian residents (16.138 women and 14.795 men).

Main communities of non-Italian residents in the city of Padua are the following:

Country of origin	Number of residents
Romania	8.533
Moldova	5.165
Nigeria	2.287
Morocco	2.051
Albania	1.858
China	1.805
Philippines	1.798

Source: Municipality of Padua, Department of Planning Control and Statistics, available at: [www.padovanet.it/allegati/C\\_1\\_Allegati\\_14714\\_Allegato.pdf](http://www.padovanet.it/allegati/C_1_Allegati_14714_Allegato.pdf).

## Violence against Women: Italy

In 2006 the national Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) conducted a survey on violence against women funded by the Ministry for equal opportunities. The sample included 25.000 women, from 16 to 70 years old. Although this was the most comprehensive and systematic survey available at the time, it did not include non-Italian women. Results are as follows:

- 6.743.000 women between the ages of 16 and 70 are victims of physical or sexual assault in their lifetime;
- more than the 96 % of women, who suffered violence, did not report it;
- 5 million women were subjected to sexual abuse;
- 3.961.000 to physical abuse;
- 1 million women were victims of rape or attempted rape;
- 2.938.000 women suffered physical or sexual violence by their partner or ex-partner;
- more than 7 million women are or have been victims of psychological violence (isolation, control, intimidation);
- 2.077.000 women have suffered persecutory behaviors (stalking).

The percentage of women who suffered violence in their lifetime in Italy is as follow (by type of violence and type of author):

	By any author	By the partner or ex-partner	By a man, not the partner
Physical or sexual violence	31,9	14,3	24,7
Physical violence	18,8	12,0	9,8
Sexual violence	23,7	6,1	20,4
Rape or attempted rape	4,8	2,4	2,9
Rape	2,3	1,6	0,8
Attempted rape	3,3	1,3	2,3

Source: Istat, National Survey 2006, available at: [www3.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/non\\_calendario/20070221\\_00/testointegrale.pdf](http://www3.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/non_calendario/20070221_00/testointegrale.pdf).

The percentage of women who suffered violence in their lifetime in Italy, but did not report it is as follows (by type of violence and type of author):

	By any author	By the partner or an ex-partner	By a man, not the partner
Physical or sexual violence	93,8	92,5	95,6
Physical violence	90,1	92,3	88,1
Sexual violence	97,8	94,9	98,0
Rape or attempted rape	93,3	94,3	92,9
Rape	91,6	94,8	87,4
Attempted rape	94,2	95,0	94,1

Source: Istat, National Survey 2006, available at: [www3.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/non\\_calendario/20070221\\_00/testointegrale.pdf](http://www3.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/non_calendario/20070221_00/testointegrale.pdf).

The percentage of women who suffered violence by a partner in their lifetime in Italy is as follows (by type of author and type of violence):

	By present partner or ex-partner	Present partner	Ex-partner	Husband or Live-in partner	Fiancé	Ex-husband or ex live-in partner	Ex-fiancé
Physical violence	6,7	9,2	6,8	9,5	7,7	5,0	7,8
Sexual violence	2,4	2,7	4,3	1,9	6,9	1,2	6,1
Physical and sexual violence	0,4	0,3	0,8	0,3	–	0,4	1,0
Physical and psychological violence	50,4	56,4	46,9	55,9	58,8	46,1	47,3
Sexual and psychological violence	13,4	15,7	11,5	15,5	16,9	6,9	14,2
Physical, sexual and psychological violence	26,8	15,7	29,8	16,8	9,7	40,5	23,6

Source: Istat, National Survey 2006., available at: [www3.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati /non\\_calendario/20070221\\_00/testointegrale.pdf](http://www3.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati /non_calendario/20070221_00/testointegrale.pdf).

## VAW in Veneto Region

The Commission for Equal Opportunities of the Veneto region has developed, in collaboration with the Statistical System of the region, an analysis at the regional level on VAW from the data of the 'National Survey Istat 2006 already mentioned in this study. The results came out in March 2008.

- 34.3% women experienced violence in the Veneto (19.6% of women victims of physical violence and 26% sexual);
- most common form of sexual violence is the physical harassment for sexual purposes, which covers 91% of the episodes suffered by non-partner;
- the great majority of violence are not reported and reach 95,6% when a man other than a partner is involved and 93,9 % when the partner is involved

The percentage of women who suffered violence in their lifetime in the Veneto is the following (by type of violence and type of author):

	By any author	By the partner or ex-partner	By a man, not the partner
Physical or sexual violence	34,3	13,3	28,0
Physical violence	19,6	10,8	11,3
Sexual violence	26,0	5,1	23,0
Rape or attempted rape	5,7	2,2	3,9

Source: Processing Veneto Region – Direction of Regional Statistical System on Istat data, Commission for Equal Opportunities of Veneto.

The percentage of women who suffered violence by a partner in their lifetime in the Veneto is as follows (by type of author and type of violence):

	By present partner or ex-partner	Husband or Live-in partner	Fiancé	Ex-husband or ex live-in partner	Ex- fiancé
Physical violence	5,3	10,0	—	8,2	7,8
Sexual violence	3,4	2,3	20,5	—	4,2
Physical and sexual violence	—	—	—	—	—
Physical and psychological violence	56,0	52,0	69,5	52,7	50,1
Sexual and psychological violence	15,5	21,1	6,7	8,8	17,6

	By present partner or ex-partner	Husband or Live-in partner	Fiancé	Ex-husband or ex live-in partner	Ex- fiancé
Physical, sexual and psychological violence	19,9	14,6	3,3	30,2	20,4

Source: Processing Veneto Region – Direction of Regional Statistical System on Istat data, Commission for Equal Opportunities of Veneto.

## The Anti-Violence Centre of Padua

The Centro Veneto Projects Women – AUSER is an association of women (voluntary, independent and non-profit organizations) established in March 1990, and it is responsible for preventing and solving the various forms of deprivation of women and families with special attention to situations of violence and abuse. These data refer to the users registered in the last three years, 2009 – 2011.

Year	Total users	Italian women	Non-Italian women (nationality)	Request	Type of violence
2009	215	153 (71%)	62 (29%) Romania, Moldova, Morocco, Russia	High prevalence of situations of violence in intimate relationships (190 women, 88%) than in cases of non domestic violence	Prevalence of cases of physical violence, followed by cases of psychological violence
2010	230	155 (67%)	75 (33%) Romania, Morocco, Moldova,	High prevalence of situations of violence in intimate relationships (202 women, 88%) than in cases of non domestic violence	Prevalence of cases of physical violence, followed by cases of psychological violence only increase in cases of stalking
2011	236	170 (72%)	66 (28%) Romania, Morocco, Moldova,	High prevalence of situations of violence in intimate relationships (211 women, 89%) than in cases of non domestic violence	Prevalence of cases of physical violence, followed by cases of psychological violence





### 3 Barcelona: Unveiling the Multidimensionality of VAW through Intersectionality

#### 3.1. Survey for Professionals on VAW, Migration and Cultural Differences

##### Objectives and Methodology of the Survey

In Catalonia, the survey shared the objectives of the common partnership survey. However, some minor changes were introduced to the survey questionnaire agreed by the partnership. These changes referred to the types of organisations and professional profiles of respondents, which were adapted to the reality of organisations and professionals active in Catalonia, while some new content was added to cover the local social situation and legal framework, as well as the current topics under the public eye. In this sense, some items were added in connection to the Catalan law against sexist violence (e.g. “Do you think sexist violence is an adequate term?”). Similarly, more items were added on the question discussing the different types of Muslim veil, taking into account the Catalan controversy over recent local regulations forbidding integral veil in public premises.

To facilitate responses, the questionnaire was translated into Catalan (the official language for public administration) and also Spanish (the most widespread language among migrants).

Methodologically speaking, it should be taken into account that many options in some of the questions may make it difficult to interpret the results.

The questionnaire was distributed through an online platform to 2000 professionals in Catalonia. A total of 108 respondents reached the final questions, while another 53 respondents abandoned the survey. The selection of professionals to whom sending the questionnaire was made according to three inclusion criteria: widely known experts on VAW and female migration; random sample of professionals from diverse backgrounds and services (health, education, welfare services...); and civil society organisations, mainly associations of migrants, migrant women, and women’s associations and groups.

##### Results: Descriptive Analysis of Respondents

The majority of the responses were received from professionals working in the city of Barcelona (62%), while only a minority of respondents worked in several cities and towns mostly of the Barcelona province. The overwhelming majority

of respondents were women (88%, 95 respondents) and were Spanish-born (84%), with a diverse sample of different countries of origin, mostly South American and just only 1 respondent for each of the rest of countries: Morocco, Romania, Senegal, Italy, Cuba, Peru, Portugal, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Most respondents had a college degree: 28% of them had post graduate studies (*licenciatura*) and 26% had a graduate degree (*diplomatura*). The age distribution of respondents was not even, with two major groups in two extremes: those born in 1960 or earlier (28.8%) and those born in 1981 or later (18.3%).

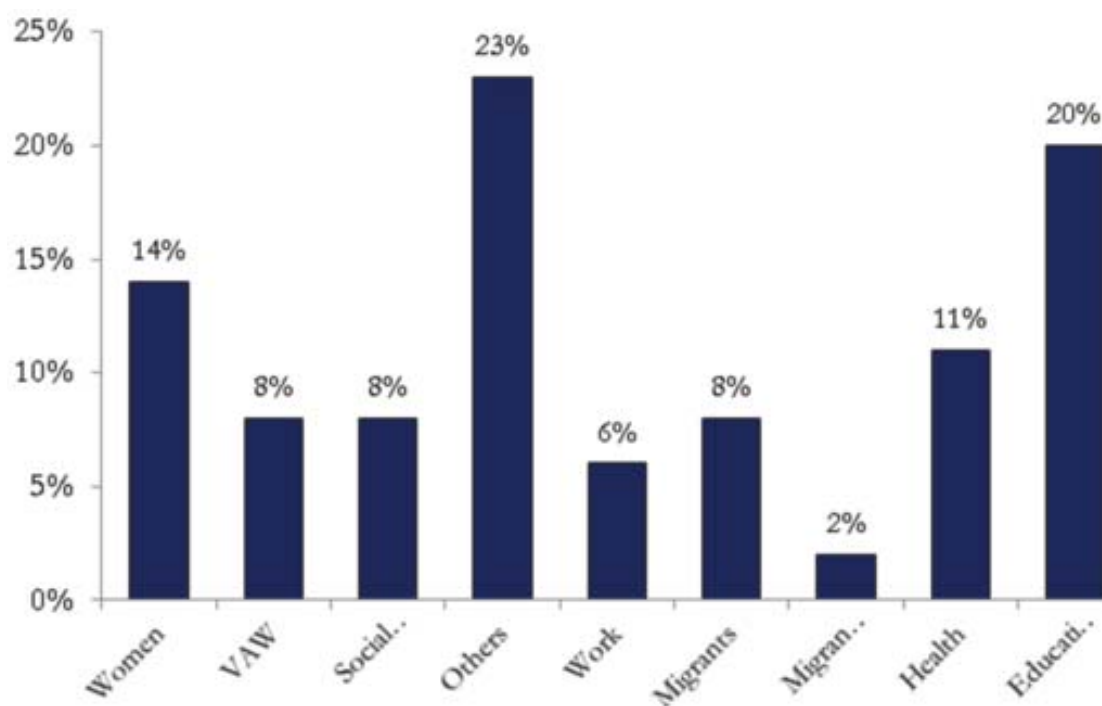
A great variety of organisations replied to the survey, grouped in the graph below according to their main focus. 23% of respondents classified their organisations under the category “others” (mainly NGOs with several purposes).

57% of the respondents worked in a public organisation and 36% said that they worked in non-profit private organisations (as NGOs or associations).

As regards the types of professionals who answered the questionnaires, 24% of the respondents worked as directors or coordinators of the service, 15% as social workers and 18% chose the option “others” (including a variety of very specific professional tasks). Other significant responses were teachers (11%), psychologists (10%) and educators (9%). We think that a methodological difficulty may have arisen in this question due to the heterogeneity of the answers (including professions but also positions in organisation) and the partial overlapping of some items.

Regarding the numbers and characteristics of the women using their services, most professionals said that their organisation served “few” migrant women,

Figure 5:  
Respondents according to the main purpose of the organisation they work for.



taking into account the total number of users. Quantities were distributed across the different types of organisations; it stands out, however, that all VAW services, except one, served few or very few migrant women. However, the results gathered should be taken with caution, because they are merely indicators of the perceptions of professionals and not based on actual data of the organisations.

The main areas of origin of the migrant or refugee women served by organisations were Latin America and Morocco (both 41%). The number of refugee women was insignificant; 70% said that they had none in their services. 8% of the professionals said that their organisations only served “few” Roma women, while 29% served none. Significantly 34% did not answer the question of the origin of Roma women, but answers collected on this issue reflect a majority of Spanish Roma women (53%) and smaller numbers of Romanian and Bulgarian Roma women.

Regarding the requests of migrant/refugee/Roma women, the most frequent requests were economic support (17%), professional guidance or occupational integration (14%) and Catalanian and Spanish languages courses (13%), three requests which have clearly increased in Catalonia due to the economic crisis (Rubio *et al.* 2011). Legal advice, social services and housing information were also often mentioned. The most frequent requests were obviously related to the types of organisations and their objectives (e.g. health services received mainly health support requests).

As for the demands that were more difficult to meet, the most frequent response was economic support (23%), followed by professional guidance or occupational integration (16%) and finally housing information (14%), again three requests which are clearly related to the economic crisis. The difficulties to meet these needs may be a consequence of higher demands associated to the crisis and rising poverty, and lower investment in public services.

77% of the professionals said that they were not aware of any cases of migrant/refugee/Roma women asking to be seen by female professionals. Of the 23% who had such a request, 85% believed that this demand should be met. Qualitative information provided by respondents is especially interesting to better understand the situation: many professionals said this was not an issue because, in the service, all or almost all professionals were women (this was especially common among support services for women). Others said that those who asked were not women, but their husbands. Two mentioned that women requested not only female professionals, but also professionals of migrant origin.

The reasons provided to meet this demand were that it was their will and it should be respected and that it provided a space of confidence. Other professionals said that the specific issue of violence or FGM required a support where they felt more comfortable, and that such support was especially advisable in the first phase. A few professionals mentioned that this request was associated to a cultural/religious group (Moroccan Muslims).

## Training of Professionals and Work Methodology

A high percentage of professionals (60%) said they had specific VAW training in the last 3 years. It should be taken into account that having a basic training (and hence, an informed understanding) on VAW may have been a motivation to answer the full questionnaire, making the sample of the survey biased in this respect. This is confirmed by the fact that, out of the professionals who did not answer the whole questionnaire but answered to this question, 50% did not receive specific VAW training.

Out of the professionals with training on VAW, 51% said they had been trained between 2 and 5 times and 31% said that they had received “continuous and periodic training”. According to the types of organisation, a significant majority of those who received training worked at services for women, health services and VAW services.

The main training priority for the professionals working with migrant/refugees/Roma women on their job was “periodic training to understand and tackle with cultural diversity” (42%), followed by “periodic training in a gender perspective and in migrant/refugee/Roma women rights” (19%). This may seem to point out that it is generally considered more valuable to be trained on cultural diversity than on the intersection of gender and cultural diversity. In any case, training was favoured over “intercultural mediators support” (only mentioned as first priority by 16% of professionals, mainly at health and education services).

Regarding the first priority on basic training on VAW and migrant/refugee/Roma women, the most chosen options were “Global marginalization of women” (13%), “VAW relating to life and work experiences of migrant, refugee or Roma women in Catalonia/Spain” (11%), and with a 10% percentage for both: “Typologies of family conflicts in different types of households in Catalonia/Spain” and “VAW, cultural differences and reproductive rights in Catalonia/Spain”.

When asked about their priority topics to improve their training on VAW, and regardless of the long list of options, professionals had a clearer preference over “domestic and family violence”, with 31% of the responses, followed by “psychological violence” with 14% and finally “intimate partner violence” with 12%. These options point out the main concern for professionals (as referred to in other questions).

## Violence against Women

81% of professionals found that the visibility of violence against women had increased in Catalonia. This is the most common answer among all types of organisations except educational centres, where 52% of professionals thought that VAW was not becoming more and more visible over time.

Figure 6: Responses of professionals to the question “Is violence against women increasing?”



As for the reasons for visibility, respondents generally described an increased presence of VAW in public debate, even though they were unsure or critical about the extension of this presence: only one statement had a majority of “totally agree” responses (and only 47%: “mass media talk more about VAW”), while most other statements were given between 50 and 62% of “moderately agree” answers regarding issues such as women reporting more about violence, the engagement of institutions against VAW and the spreading of associations and services, better informed professionals.

Regarding the potential increasing trend of VAW in Catalonia, 61% of the professionals agreed that VAW was in fact increasing. This opinion was unanimous among migrant services and migrant women services. By contrast, professionals working in VAW services were mostly of the opinion that it is not increasing (67%).

Professionals also showed a huge support to the statement that the economic crisis may increase the VAW cases: 56% totally agreed and 35% moderately agreed to the statement.

The most widespread types and spheres of violence against women in Catalonia are, according to respondents, violence in the domestic sphere/family violence and intimate partner violence, both with a 33% of answers each, highlighting again the importance given to these items by professionals. Another 14% highlighted psychological violence and inequality in the gender division of care work within the couple. All other answers had much smaller percentages. The formulation of the question makes it difficult to evaluate the extent to which professionals are concerned about specific forms violence migrant women are most exposed to (such as violence and discrimination against foreigners), because they have to compete with more generally defined and less cultural-associated forms of violence.

A similar concern about the central role of violence in the domestic sphere/family violence and intimate partnerships is shown when professionals identify the sphere of VAW that they find the most dangerous for the whole society: the 29% thought that it is violence in the domestic sphere/family violence, followed by murders by spouse/partner or former spouse/partner, with an 18% of the responses, and finally psychological violence (11%).

## Definitions, Explanations and Risks

Professionals were also asked about the factors that better explain the extension of the VAW in Catalonia and the majority response was the cultural support, explicit or implicit, to male domination, with a 34% of the responses. This shows a strong or “hard” feminist understanding of violence against women. Most of them (73%) had received training on VAW. None of them worked in services for migrants or migrants women.

A “soft” gender-based understanding of VAW (not so much based on structural male domination, but on individual attitudes related to gender roles) is evident in the majority of responses, such as “many men consider ‘natural’ women’s dependency on their wishes and decisions”, with 23% of the responses or “many women do not behave anymore in accordance with their partners expectations”, with 11%.

5% of professionals identified the main explanatory factor of increasing violence to an increased migration, supporting the statement “There are more migrants and foreigners supporting cultures disrespectful of gender equality”. 80% of them had not received specific VAW training in the last three years.

Regarding women more at risk of suffering VAW in intimate heterosexual relationships, the main responses clearly described dependence on partner as the most important risk (40%), which points to an understanding of VAW as an instrumental means of power and control. However, the second most common response was psychological (with no power analysis): “women with a low self-confidence” (34%). This second view is more prevalent among those who have not received VAW training (64%) and professionals of the educational sector (18% of responses).

Biases and monolithic cultural perceptions are present in a very low percentage of responses: only 1 professional linked a higher risk to low educational level; 1 professional attributed higher risk to having religious beliefs, and 2 others to Muslim religion, and another professional attributed higher risk to sub-Saharan and Latin American women.

Regarding male perpetrators, 90% of professionals said that some men are more prone to violence than others. Most professionals gave a psychological explanation of this proneness, relating it to having suffered violence as children (35%) and being predisposed to a violent behaviour (22%). However, two gender-based explanations received also many responses: men living in a context where gender inequality is considered as a social norm (17%) and men considering the women’s dependency on their wishes and decisions as the best pattern of a gender relationship (15%).

There was a general rejection of the statement that women and men have the same risk of suffering for partners’ violent behaviour in their intimate relationships: 43% moderately disagreed and 40% totally disagreed. This shows again a general feminist understanding of VAW, but the high percentage of moderate

disagreement points out the relevance of a moderate, uncertain or critical version of gender-based explanations of violence. The same pattern is found in the responses of the statement “also in our modern societies VAW is related to the social conflict around the continuity of masculine domination on a practical as well as on a symbolic level” (Q39), with 51% of total agreement and 43% of moderate agreement.

Following this general gender-based understanding of VAW, 38% totally agreed to the statement “irrespective to their social and cultural differences, all women are at the same risk of violence considering their lack of power in gender relationship” and 28% moderately agreed. These responses also show a feminist understanding of VAW, but the percentage of moderate agreement may be related either to a “softer” feminist-related understanding of violence. Of those who totally agreed with the statement, 75% had received VAW training. This view was mostly widespread among services for migrant women (100% chose this option) and VAW services (55%).

Regarding sexual violence, 34% totally agreed and 43% moderately agreed to “the social recognition of the men’s right to maintain sexual relations with his partner or wife increases the risk of violence”. Again, the amount of moderate responses points out a general, but not complete recognition of the importance of structural patriarchal norms on VAW.

It is also interesting to note the acceptance of the term of sexist violence (*violència masclista*) as an adequate term to refer to VAW (36% moderately agreed and 31% totally agreed). This may show only a moderate acceptance of the concept consolidated in the Catalan law to describe VAW. This is relevant because the Catalan law was a pioneer, from a feminist point of view, in coining a term which very clearly defines violence as a direct consequence of gender inequality.

Regarding equality policies, there is a general view of the need of equality policies, even though a third of the respondents are somehow critical about them. 66% totally disagreed and 31% moderately disagreed to the statement that in Catalonia there is equality between men and women and gender equality policies are not necessary anymore.

### **Specific Types, Spheres, Risk Factors and Vulnerable Groups**

Over the questionnaire, some questions focus on specific forms and spheres of VAW; as well as factors associated to increased risks of VAW.

One of the risk factors analysed is marriage: professionals do not consider that de-facto couples are more at risk (70% totally disagreed, 29% moderately disagreed), while generally they relate arranged marriages to VAW: 62% totally disagreed and 30% moderately disagreed to the statement that women are more at risk of suffering violence by their partner in love marriages than in family arranged marriages. There is also a link between forced and arranged marriages, which questions the voluntary character of family arrangements on the part of

women: 52% totally agreed and 34% moderately agreed that arranged marriages are a type of social violence that affects mainly women.

Regarding contraception and abortion, it was strongly linked to violence against women: 60% totally agreed and 30% moderately agreed that the difficulties to access to contraception methods are a type of social violence against women. Similarly, 65% totally agreed and 30% moderately agreed that the legislation that denies the women's freedom to abortion is a type of social violence against women.

As for prostitution, a conservative understanding of voluntary prostitution as a social need defending marriage was rejected by all respondents, with 77% of total disagreement, and 23% of moderate disagreement.

Positions about voluntary prostitution and its link with VAW were divided. 42% moderately disagreed, 23% moderately agreed and 18% totally agreed that prostitution should be considered as a kind of VAW, even when it is a personal choice.

More consensus was reached on the statement "when it is a personal choice, prostitution can empower women", which was mostly moderately disagreed on (47%) or totally rejected (20%). However, 2% of professionals totally agreed and 31% moderately agreed with it, showing the clear social divided opinions on this matter. Division was also showed in opinions about the banning of voluntary prostitution as a form of VAW: 41% moderately agreed and 35% moderately disagreed. 52% moderately agreed to the statement that voluntary prostitution is a job.

Generally speaking, the relationship of prostitution with economic reasons was recognised, with big support of statements such as "It's, above all, the lack of economic resources that leads women to prostitution" (32% totally agreed, 50% moderately agreed) and "women involve in voluntary prostitution basically to make more money" (23% totally agreed and 49% moderately agreed).

Finally, and related to street regulations on prostitution, 45% totally agreed with the fact that women involved in prostitution are better when they work inside the premises of a business than on the streets and 37% moderately agreed. What professionals saw clearly is that women involved in prostitution were considered more vulnerable to VAW: 54% totally agreed and 35% moderately agreed.

Concerning the manifestations of violence in intimate partnerships, the first clear sign of this form of violence was identified as "lack of respect", with 23% of the responses, followed by the "negation of the other as a person" (21%). Other responses point more clearly to elements of control ("limitation to personal freedom", with 10% and "imposition on the other's will" with 9%). This is linked to the importance given to psychological violence in other answers.

The conceptual understanding of intimate partner violence as a consequence of the romantic imaginary was widespread, but professionals were also critical about this. The statement "To consider jealousy as a love signal and inseparable part of the relation is a risk factor in the affective relationships" raised 64% of total agreement responses, but also 31% of moderate agreement responses.



Some of the questions provided interesting information about the role of sexual orientation in VAW and violence against LGTB people. When asked if the origin of the VAW is on the social norms that privilege the heterosexual relationships, 41% moderately disagreed and 29% moderately agreed. This shows that there is no clear view about the relevance of hetero-normativity in theoretical definitions of VAW. Regarding actual cases of intimate partnership violence, professionals disagreed that homosexuals have more risk to suffer violence by their partner than heterosexuals (71% totally disagreed and 25% moderately disagreed). However, when asked if the prohibition of marriage with people from the same sex is a type of social violence against this people 67% totally agreed and 27% moderately agreed. The agreement on the concept of “social violence” as a stronger version of what discrimination in this statement may show how discrimination against LGTB people is considered intolerable, but not related to gender-based violence.

Questions about the ability of women to exert violence produced unsure responses, with high percentages of moderate positions. For example, 40% moderately disagreed and 34% moderately agreed that women are able to use the same violence than men, especially in their intimate relationships. Moderate percentages in this and other responses may point out the fact that professionals are unsure about the conceptualisation of violence outside of the most common framework limited to male perpetrators.

### **Migrant Women and Violence**

Some questions provide information about the perception professionals have of migrants. Professionals are very aware of the lack of opportunities and rights of migrants: 63% totally disagreed and 31% moderately disagreed to the statement “In Catalonia migrants share the same rights and opportunities with the rest of the population and specific migration/intercultural policies are not necessary”. However, this discrimination was not so clearly linked to the legal system; 36% totally agreed and 31% moderately agreed that “the legal system discriminates migrants”.

Also relevant is that for 47% of the professionals the most widespread type of VAW is that “committed by migrant/refugee men against women of the same nationality or group”. 34% thought that it is “violence committed by native men against native women”. This shows not only a perception of the higher prevalence of migrant victims and perpetrators, but a conceptualisation of intimate partner violence as a phenomenon limited to the interaction between members of the same cultural group.

As for the vulnerability of migrant/refugee and Roma women regarding VAW, 59% totally agreed and 38% moderately agreed that migrant women are more vulnerable to VAW because of their vulnerability in legal, economic, labour and social terms (e.g. lack of support networks) and this made it more difficult

for them to press charges. Similarly, 53% moderately agreed and 41% totally agreed that migrant, refugee or Roma women are often more vulnerable to VAW because their legal status or due to discrimination in administrative local rules.

Views are more divided about the adequacy of existing mechanisms to press charges and VAW attention services to migrant women: 51% moderately disagreed and 29% moderately agreed.

The Catalan society was generally recognised as more egalitarian than some societies migrants come from, even though professionals are somehow critical about this view: 55% moderately agreed and 30% totally agreed that “most come from countries with more inequalities between men and women”.

Their higher vulnerability to VAW in the workplace was not strongly recognised: 56% moderately agreed and 25% moderately disagreed to the statement “In workplaces, migrant, refugee or Roma women undergo harassment, mobbing and other kinds of violence more than Italian women”.

Vulnerability was related to family reunification due to dependence of partner (45% moderately agreed; 39% totally agreed) and also to family control of spaces and movement: 67% totally agreed and 30% moderately agreed that “migrant, refugee or Roma women are more vulnerable to VAW where family rules restrain their independent mobility outside their house”.

The obligation to learn the language as a way to reduce vulnerability to VAW was recognised, but not strongly. 45% moderately agreed; 30% totally agreed.

Cultural relativism was not widespread among respondents. 49% totally disagreed and 37% moderately disagreed to “in every culture, relationships between men and women are different. We must respect that what in Catalonia is considered as violence may not be violence in other cultures.” Similarly, questions pointing at the respect of cultural rights and individual freedom over issues of social equality did not have much acceptance, as shown by the 38% of moderate rejection and 37% of total rejection of the statement “The possibility of having separate swimming pools for women could be approved as it is in favour of cultural rights and women privacy”.

Other items of the questionnaire point out in the same direction, generally rejecting relativist visions of what constitutes VAW over the law and human rights. For example, 41% of professionals moderately disagreed and 25% totally disagree that only the women suffering intimate partnership sexual violence can say if what they have suffered is or it is not violence (except the cases covered in the criminal code).

Statements presenting stereotypes of migrants and migrant women were generally rejected, but an important part of professionals did not totally disagree with them. For example, 52% totally disagreed and 37% moderately disagreed to “most of them do not want to integrate in our society”, 47% moderately agreed and 35% moderately disagreed to “they are more submissive than women born in Catalonia and this leads to a higher risk of VAW in intimate partnerships”, and 43% moderately agreed and 42% totally agreed to “migrant, refugee or Roma

women are often well educated but they are obliged to accept low-level jobs. This is a form of social violence”.

Regarding the Muslim veil, regulations banning the burqa were not unanimously linked to VAW (45% moderately disagreed that they constitute to VAW; 28% moderately agreed). However, limitations of the freedom of women to choose to cover their head or body with a veil were considered a type of violence: 52% moderately agreed and 31% moderately disagreed to this statement. The degree of moderate positions may point out to uncertain views about this issue.

There was a general disagreement on the fact that women who cover themselves with veil are less vulnerable to many forms of violence outside the house: 49% moderately disagreed and 35% totally disagreed. This rejects the justification of the veil as a way to protect women.

The most recognised reasons why women wear the Muslim veil were reaffirmation of cultural identity (moderate agreement 76%) and religious practices (moderate agreement 72%) Even though these two reasons were considered the most important, moderate agreement seems to point out an uncertain or critical acceptance of these statements.

Professionals were also unsure about the voluntary character of the veil: 43% moderately disagreed and 43% moderately agreed with the statement that women who wear veil do so because the family or men require them.

Identification of wearing the veil with VAW, even if voluntarily, was also unclear: 43% moderately agreed to this identification and 41% moderately disagreed.

Finally, the distinction between the types of veil was generally recognised, but not always strongly: 41% moderately agreed and 40% totally agreed that to cover her head with a veil is not comparable to cover all body with a burqa or niqab.

Putting the issue of the veil in the context of the regulation of Western women's bodies, professionals rejected identifying FGM to Western genital aesthetic surgery procedures: 44% moderately disagreed and 31% totally disagreed to the statement “Some types of the legal genital aesthetic surgery are more invasive than some illegal typologies of Female Genital Modification)”. However, the regulation of modified representations of women in publicity was generally accepted: 41% moderately agreed and 36% totally agreed with “The possibility of having rules against some kind of publicity using women/men bodies is a good form of anti-VAW politics”.

## 3.2. Conclusion

The responses to some of the questions and the comments of respondents in open questions show multiple methodological problems in the planning of the survey. Regarding the formulation of the questions, some of them are not clear and/or request a high degree of abstract thinking, previous knowledge of cer-

tain issues, or the ability to understand subtle conceptual distinctions. All of this, together with the length of the questionnaire, may put into question the veracity of the perceptions collected with the questionnaire.

However, some general remarks can be made. In general terms, the responses to the questionnaire show a feminist understanding of violence against women among professionals. These results may be linked with the very high 60% of respondents who received training on violence against women and a high percentage of them have received periodic training. Most of them worked in services for women, health services and VAW services.

The centrality of intimate partner violence, violence in the family and psychological violence as training interests of professionals and as the types of violence professionals are more concerned of. Other types of violence (in the workplace, sexual violence, harassment in public spaces, economic violence) do not receive enough focus by professionals.

Some xenophobic responses and biased conceptions of migrant women were gathered in the survey (such as identifying an increase on VAW to increased migration or relating it with specific cultures, countries of origin and religion). Strong xenophobic, biased positions were only shown by a small minority of professionals, but on the other hand, a larger number of professionals did not totally disagree with these statements.

Cultural relativist responses showing respect for cultures over the rights of women were also a minority. However, more common was uncertainty regarding key cultural questions: many responses are placed in the “moderate agreement” space, showing perhaps an uncertain, ambivalent or incomplete understanding of specific phenomena. This is especially relevant to controversial issues where culture and gender intersect, such as the Muslim veil and prostitution. The criss-crossing of these two factors made it difficult for professionals to take a clear position about them.

### 3.3. Focus Groups on VAW, Migration and Cultural Differences

#### Objectives and Methodology of the Focus Groups

Three focus groups were organised as follows:

- one with 15 professionals of Spanish and Moroccan origin;
- one with 7 professionals of Spanish, Latin American and Moroccan origin;
- one with 7 migrant women from different Latin American countries.

Professionals participating in the focus groups were selected according to the criterion of interest and expertise on violence against women and female migration, so that participants could provide informed opinions. Regarding the focus group with migrant women, they were participants in a vocational training course at SURT.

The objective of the focus groups both with professionals and migrant women was to gather perceptions regarding definitions of violence against women, specific types and risk factors of violence against migrant women and knowledge of resources available. The professionals' groups also included discussion of the needs and demands of migrant women and strategies of professionals to address violence against migrant women, with a special focus on empowerment methodologies. On the other hand, in the migrant women's group a lot of attention was given to the topic of gender roles in general, in order to explore the underlying conceptions that may lead to violence against women.

## Results

The focus groups showed very interesting points to be further explored in research about the specific definition, forms and spheres of violence against migrant women.

First, existing definitions of violence against women cannot exactly be applied to migrant women. Though both professionals and women related to a feminist definition of VAW based on control over women's autonomy, exerted by a variety of agents (partners, employers, community and institutions) and in different private and public spaces, it should be taken into account that the concept of violence against women is not fixed. Definitions of sexist violence were promoted by feminist activism to express the fatal consequences over women of gender discrimination. During the fieldwork, the discourses of both professionals and women showed that the boundaries between discrimination and violence are not clear. The experiences that some described as discrimination others defined as violence to put emphasis on its unfairness. Defining manifestations of discrimination as forms of violence is a form of activism that demands a stronger reaction of public administrations and society at large to respect and defend women's rights.

Secondly, both professionals and migrant women focused the discussion of violence against women on intimate partner violence, and especially psychological violence. However, other types and spheres were mentioned as specific forms and spheres of VAW affecting migrant women: institutional violence, community violence (identified especially in migrants from the Maghreb), violence in the workplace, violence against domestic workers, transnational violence.

One of the types of violence specific to migrant women was institutional violence, i.e., violence exerted by public institutions and officers. The most important form of institutional violence that appeared was the legal and social discrimination against migrant women in the host country, which was defined by some professionals as a form of violence. Also included in institutional violence was the neglect of public institutions towards migrant women, for example when civil servants and professionals (social workers, teachers, career guidance

counsellors...) did not inform them or inform inaccurately or inefficiently about their rights. Similarly, simply informing migrant women about their rights, but refusing to effectively empower women to defend their rights was also considered violence.

Another relevant aspect of violence specific to migrant women was community violence, defined as the control of public space by the male migrant community of a specific origin. This meant an occupation of central public spaces by men and limiting access to these spaces to women. A Moroccan mediator described the case of a small town where the Moroccan men occupied the central square and effectively limited the circulation of Moroccan women through the square, making them find new ways to get around town through small, side streets.

Professionals also related this kind of male migrant community violence to the reinforcement of patriarchal norms in the host country, which may be motivated by the reconstruction of male migrant identities in a new context where they are powerless. The way to reinforce their lost power is to strengthen control over women in the migrant community where they live. The destabilisation of male identity is a process associated to migration, regardless of origin (Donaldson 2009; Alcalde 2011). However, during fieldwork it was only professionals working with North-African migrants that identified community violence as an issue.

Professionals also mentioned how institutional violence may reinforce community violence exerted by the male migrant community. For example, public administrations seem to give sometimes too much power to conservative imams when they are identified as the only legitimate representatives of the community in public policy design. This way diversity inside a migrant or ethnic community is ignored and delegation is placed on a single conservative patriarchal voice.

A remarkable public debate illustrating these attitudes has developed in Catalonia around local regulations forbidding the integral veil in public spaces (which in practice results in more reclusion for women). All social groups seem to have an opinion about it except the women themselves, whose voices are not usually present in the public debate, denying their voice as interlocutors for the issues that affect them. Instead migrant women are instrumentalised by the interests of different social groups (political parties, hegemonic voices in the community, etc.).

Another type of violence specific to migrant women was violence exerted against domestic workers, a kind of violence in the workplace which is strongly related to domestic violence, as it is perpetrated inside a private home, and in a sector where many migrant women are employed (as a result of gender-based phenomenon of the “global care chains”). This type of violence was especially emphasized by the migrant women’s focus group.

Finally, another form of migrant-specific VAW was transnational violence, defined as pressure on migrant women exerted from the countries of origin. The

pressure may be aimed at forcing women to comply with traditional gender roles in a new context.

The emphasis on all these forms of violence suggests that further attention should be paid to other forms of gender-based violence (in the workplace, institutional violence) to ensure a deeper understanding of how gender-based violence is defined, how it intersects with xenophobic and racist violence, who are the perpetrators in each case (some may be women and not men) and how are responses articulated. In this sense, the debate of professionals about the integral veil illustrates that professionals are concerned both about discrimination and violence against women and xenophobic attitudes, but the interaction of both concerns results in having confusing, contradictory or ambivalent viewpoints, which may inhibit professionals to clearly position themselves and act.

Thirdly, as far as the positions of migrant women on gender equality and VAW is concerned, migrant women showed a general understanding of gender equality and positioned themselves against sexism in the public and private spheres. However, when discussing everyday negotiation of gender roles, their positions generally veered to traditional gender roles. This may be related to the perception of some professionals on the existence of a vague unease to VAW among migrant women, but greater difficulties of precisely identifying violence, or the recourse to couple mediation as a viable solution. At any rate, results suggest that there is much to be improved in deepening sensitisation and understanding of VAW among migrant women, as well as on their knowledge of available anti-violence services.

There was a tendency to identify higher sexism in countries of origin among professionals and migrant women, which may result in biases. This should be challenged with a deeper understanding of the multiplicity, evolving nature of cultures both in the countries of origin and host countries.

The focus groups also provided interesting information about how to improve methodologies for preventing and addressing VAW with migrant women. Good practices suggested by professionals were women's multicultural groups (including Spanish-born women), migrant mediators accessing traditionally female spaces (homes, maternity hospitals, schools), working with migrant men and, above all, long-term community intervention work to diagnose the existing disempowering forces in the community and find allies to design strategies for empowerment that do not place the responsibility of overcoming VAW exclusively on the women suffering it.

Professionals denounced how migrant women have been denied a voice in the public and political debates that affect them (for example, regulation of the integral veil), while migrant women themselves showed a tendency to self-deny their own voice because of fear that public exposure may put them in even more vulnerable positions with the authorities. This legal vulnerability, together with other vulnerability factors such as the lack of support networks and the instrumentalisation of vulnerability by perpetrators for higher abuse, as well as the

specific definitions and forms of VAW described above among migrant women, may demand designing specific strategies to prevent and address VAW with this target group.

## SOCIAL INDICATORS

### Migrants and People with Migrant Origin and on VAW in Spain

Table 5: Migration in Spain, Catalonia and Barcelona

<b>Foreign nationals in:</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of total population</b>
Spain (National level)	5,711,040	12%
Catalonia (Regional level)	1,183,907	15.6%
Barcelona (Local level)	806,108	14.5%
<b>Foreign national women in:</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of foreign nationals</b>
Spain (National level)	2,746,809	48.1%
Catalonia (Regional level)	554,423	46.8%
Barcelona (Local level)	378,843	47%

Source: Register of inhabitants January 1<sup>st</sup> 2012, provisional results, Spanish National Statistics Institute, except Barcelona data, January 1<sup>st</sup> 2011.

Currently the most common nationalities of migrant women in Catalonia are Moroccan, Rumanian, Ecuadorian, Colombian and Chinese (Source: Idescat 2011).

Table 6: Violence against Women in Catalonia

	<b>Spain</b>	<b>Catalonia</b>	<b>Barcelona</b>
Charges pressed in the violence against women courts (% of foreign nationals) <sup>1</sup>	134,002 (36%)	18,475	12,861
Number of dead women (% of foreign nationals) <sup>2</sup>	44 (22.7%)	11	4

<sup>1</sup> Source: Spanish Violence against Women courts 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Delegation of the Spanish Government for Gender Violence, Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality. Updated November 27<sup>th</sup> 2012.



According to the Spanish Macro Survey of violence against women 2011, the prevalence of intimate partner violence (by partners or ex partners) among migrant women duplicates compared to women born in Spain. 20.9% of migrant women declared being victims of violence by partners (Spanish women: only 10.1%). This percentage increased considerably compared to the earlier macro survey in 2006 (when the percentage of foreign women was 12.1).

Results also show that a 5.8% of foreign-born women had suffered violence in the previous years (while the percentage among Spanish women was only 2.8%). The percentage of women who had overcome violence (suffered violence at one point of their lives, but not in the previous year) is almost identical for both foreign-born and Spanish born women (around 72%).

According to the 2006 Spanish Macro Survey, 10% of foreign women are victims of violence but do not recognise themselves as such (for Spanish women the percentage is 5.8%).

There are no specific figures of violence against migrant women in Catalonia and Barcelona. However, the following data illustrate the prevalence of some types of gender-based violence which especially affect migrant women: in 2011 the police registered in Catalonia 36 cases of Female Genital Mutilation, 21 forced marriages and 13 minors in forced marriages.

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### **4.1. Representations of VAW, Gender and Migration among Professionals**

This part of the report summarizes the preliminary research developed in the Autonomous Community of Madrid (Spain) by CEPAIM under the Work Stream 1 of the *SPEAK OUT!* project.

The aim of this local research was to analyze the experience and understand gender violence toward migrant, refugee and ethnic minority women from three different perspectives: migrant women themselves, migrant men, and professionals belonging to different social services organizations among whose users or clients are migrant, refugee or minority women.

Both male and female migrant perspectives were explored through focus groups, whose participants in two of them were immigrant women and whose participants were men in another two. Professionals' experiences, opinions and attitudes toward gender violence affecting immigrant, refugee and ethnic minority women were collected by the use of an online survey.

In the following paragraphs, the main characteristics, results and conclusions derived from these three different perspectives are summarized.

#### **The Survey**

An online questionnaire made up of 45 questions was employed, using the e-en-cuesta.com platform and email system for its editing and distribution. Participation was voluntary and anonymous.

The questionnaire was divided into four parts. The first part was composed of questions aimed at describing the characteristics of the institution in which the professionals worked, their professional profile, and the main needs and requests of the migrant women. The second part concerned work and training methods within the institution. Some of the questions in this part specifically related to situations of gender violence. The third part explored respondents' attitudes and opinions on gender violence. Lastly, the fourth part gathered socio-demographic information.

## Participants

The survey was answered by 101 professionals and volunteers belonging to different social and health service organisations working in the Community of Madrid and counting migrant, refugee, and ethnic minority women among their users.

Most participants were women (84.91%) and Spanish (96.23%), though 7.84% of the latter had been born in other countries (Morocco, Argentina, Chile, and Switzerland). All the participants had at least completed the secondary school qualification, and the majority also possessed a university degree (94.34%).

Participants belonging to the social service sector comprised the largest single group of participants (19.80%), followed by organisations providing specific services to refugee and ethnic minority migrants (10.89%), and women's associations (8.91%).

Half of the entities (50.50%) belonged to the public sector, while 36.63% were NGOs and 4.95% from the profit-making private sector. The remainder of the sample fell into other categories.

Regarding professional profiles, 37.62% of participants defined themselves as social workers, and 12.87% as managers, 5.94% lawyers, 5.94% psychologists, and 4.95% were educators. Other categories amounted to 20.79% of the sample. Only approximately 2% of the sample defined themselves as volunteers.

30% of participants had less than two years' professional experience, with 31% reporting experience of around 2-5 years, 22% with 6-15 years, 13% with 16-25 years and the remaining 4% more than 25 years. It is clear that a high percentage of the sample had a high or very high level of professional experience.

## 4.2. Results

### **Characteristics of MREM Women in the Surveyed Services: Relative Weight of MREM Women among Services Users**

It is obvious that migrant women are the most frequent users of the services in question. In fact, they are the sole users of the services provided by 7.84% of the institutions surveyed. Furthermore, 73.27% of service providers reported to receive "many" migrant women, the percentage of providers reporting "few or very few" migrant women being only 18.81%. No organisation reported to receive "no" migrant women.

Ethnic minority and refugee women, while having less presence than migrant women, are also frequent users of the services in question. Refugee women are the group with less presence in the surveyed institutions.

Table 7. Immigrant, Ethnic Minority and Refugee Women who attended the Surveyed Social Services and Health Organizations

	None	Very few	Few	Many	All users are ...	N
<b>Immigrant women</b>	0%	3%	16%	73%	8%	101
<b>Refugee women</b>	45%	24%	22%	7%	1%	86
<b>Ethnic minority Women</b>	12%	21%	28%	37%	2%	92

### Immigrant, Refugee and Ethnic Minority Women Profile

Surveyed services receive immigrant, refugee and ethnic minority women that are young (94.44%), have children (97.85%), are alone (81.17%), live with their families (92.22%), and are unemployed (94.68). It is significant the relative low percentage of organizations working with under-aged girls (54.88%). Morocco, Romania, Bulgaria, Nigeria, Ecuador, Bolivia, Colombia, Dominican Republic and Peru are the most common origin for these immigrant, refugee, and ethnic minority women.

### Women's Main Demands and Difficulties to Give Proper Response to Women's Requests

Survey respondents inform that women's main and more frequent demands are those concerning social assistance and welfare (16.31%), vocational guidance and professional insertion (13.27%), and economic support (12.24%). The demands underlined in second order of importance are legal support (16.33%), social assistance and welfare (13.27%), and economic support (11.22%). The third place is occupied by demands of other kind of services (12.24%), social assistance and welfare (12.24%), and legal support (11,22%). It is important to emphasize that those respondents who mark the answer "other kind of services" do not refer in any case to the request for help in cases where violence against women was implied. Housing, economic support, social assistance, and professional insertion are perceived as the most difficult demands to address. This is understandable, especially when taking into account the traditional Spanish difficulties in access to housing, in providing economic and social benefits, and in employment creation.

It is especially relevant to underline that 31.25% of the surveyed professionals and volunteers have been found in the position to serve migrant, refugee or ethnic minority women who have requested to be addressed only by women. When it came to know their attitude on this issue, 71.19% of these professionals and volunteers were in favour of giving a positive answer to this demand.

## Questions on Training and Working Methods

63.16% of the surveyed professionals and volunteers have been specifically training on VAW during the last three years. This figure gives an idea of the importance that VAW has for the majority of the organizations under the study. However, it is true that an important figure like 36.84% of the participants informed that they did not receive any kind of education about this topic from their institutions, meaning that it is still a long way to go.

The more frequent topics participants perceive as a priority to achieve a basic training on VAW are “global marginalization of women” (14%), “national and EU legislation regarding MREM rights and status in relation to VAW issues (14%), and VAW effects on women’s health (12%). As second in importance are again the last one concerning women’s health (15%), those about “main explanations and approaches about VAW” (12%), and “MREM women’s life, work and violence experiences” (12%)

The kind of VAW situations perceived by the participants as the more important to be specifically trained is “domestic/family violence” (35%), although it was also remarkable the percentage of respondents considering “psychological violence” (15%) and “institutional violence” (12%) as a key issue to be prioritized in training.

When taking into account the organizational patterns for anti VAW, 38% of the respondents consider of importance to have “protocols on VAW for specialized diagnostic and treatment, with standardized and coordinated indicators for the different services in a territory”, meanwhile around 30% of them perceive as necessary to count with “common guidelines on VAW shared by the different services in a territory in order to develop a counselling and sheltering of women with a proper cultural gender sensitive approach”. It is important to emphasise that these organizational patterns have already been implemented in a high percentage of the surveyed social entities.

## Questions on Risks of Violence and Definitions of Violence:

### Risk of Violence

A very high percentage of respondents (89%) think that in Spain the VAW is now more visible than it was in the past. When trying to explain this phenomenon of greater visibility of VAW, 98% of the professionals and volunteers agree (24%) or totally agree (74%) with the fact that now mass media give more information about VAW. It also seems to be a rather unanimous agreement (>70%) with statements such as “Institutions are engaged in concrete actions against VAW” (86% ), “Institutions are engaged in campaigns against VAW” ( 82%), “women report more about violence” (74%), and “anti-VAW associations and services are more widespread” (74%).

However, total or partial disagreements (40%) are shown when considering statements like “the training received by professionals and volunteers about



VAW is getting better” and that both politically involved women (48% of disagreement) and men (66% of disagreement) are more sensitive and active towards VAW.

Participants perceived violence from Spanish men against Spanish Women (51% as first choice and 31% as a second choice) as frequent as violence from migrant men against migrant women (35% as first choice and 51% as second choice). VAW from Spanish men against migrant women (7% as first choice and 11% as second choice) and from migrant men against Spanish women (5% as first choice and 2% as second choice) are perceived as less common. It seems that professionals perceived that VAW is present in all kind of couples although they believe that its frequency is lower in mixed couples.

To explain why VAW is prevalent in the Spanish society, professionals and volunteers tend to appeal to structural vs. individual factors. In this sense, they favour statements like “Many men consider “natural” women’s dependency on their wishes and decisions” (30%) and that “implicitly or explicitly a large part of society maintains its cultural support to men supremacy on women” (29%). It is significant, and in a positive way, that there were no participants explaining VAW by considering that “many women display their body in too explicit seductive way” and only one bearing that “family and community have lost their control on the rules relating to young people sexual behaviour”.

Respondents have also been surveyed about the women’s characteristics they thought may increase the risk of being victim of VAW. When these refer to psychological and relational characteristic, participants see “low self-confidence” (45%) and “psychological dependence on the partner” (37%) as the most important women traits. When asked about socioeconomic factors the “lacking of social, family and community networks” (36%), the “economic dependence” (20%) and “living within patriarchal families, where fathers and husbands have authority over family members” (20%) were the most frequent answers. It is noteworthy that no participant considers of importance to explain VAW with being a migrant or the practice of a specific religion.

When questions focus on men, the risk of being violent is first attributed to those who have adopted patterns of violent behaviour (25%) and who have suffered violence in childhood (15%). It seems to be also relevant the claiming to control their partners’ life (15%) and “considering women’s dependence on their wishes and decisions as the best pattern of a gender relationship” (chosen by the 27% of the participants as second factor of importance to explain men’s VAW behaviour). That is, past experiences, learning and chauvinist socialization seem to be considered fundamental to explain men’s violent behaviour against women. Mental diseases (0%) and addiction problems (5%) do not seem to be proper explanatory variables of VAW by the surveyed participants.

## Opinions about VAW

Opinions and attitudes about different topics and situations related to VAW have been surveyed under the idea that they may affect actual behaviour when professionals and volunteers address MREM women needs. A first group of questions covered VAW in general. Another group consisted of questions about marriage, intimate partnership and family rules. A third and last group consisted of questions about VAW and MREM women, “honour killings” and prostitution.

It is noteworthy the lack of agreement among the respondents on general statements about VAW such as “all women are at risk of violence considering their lack of power in gender relationships” and “VAW has its major origin in social norms relating to heterosexual gender norms and relationship”. Also, it has to be underlined that around a 20% of the respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement “Women and men have the same risk of suffering partners’ violent behaviour in their intimate relationships”. It seems important to mention the inconvenience of such attitudes when professional pretend to give an adequate response to VAW.

No respondent agreed with a relationship between civil status and VAW risk. Surprisingly 9% of the sample agrees with the statement “women are more exposed to intimate partner violence in love marriages than in family arranged-marriages”. Opinions in relation to women’s freedom decisions in relation to their families, contraception and abortion seem to show a similar pattern. Around 10-15% of the sample is placed in positions that are both conservative and counterproductive to effectively contrast VAW. Although it represents a minority (<10%), the opinions of some participants about the prohibition of homosexuality as a form of violence, the vision of jealousy as a song of love, or the male monopoly to solicit sex to their partners are considered a point of attention by the Spanish research team. It is as worrying the position held by approximately half the sample on freedom of women to decide what they consider to be intimate violence.

Unfortunately, subtle xenophobic attitudes were detected among some participants. An example is that 30% of the respondents disagree with the statement “in workplaces, MREM women undergo harassment, mobbing and other kinds of violence more that Spanish women”. Although it is true that a majority of the surveyed professionals and volunteers agreed on the higher risk of VAW among MREM women, it is important to underline that 59% of the sample agree or totally agree that “rules obliging MREW people to know Spanish language to make MREM less vulnerable to VAW”.

## Use of Burqa and Veil

As Table 8 shows, the surveyed sample seems to be polarized about the understanding, use and regulation of burqa and veil. The polarization is lower when the use of these clothes is linked with VAW vulnerability, the majority (79%)

being those who disagree about this relation. It needs to be underlined the data distribution in relation to the comparison between the invasiveness of some types of legal genital aesthetic surgery and some female genital mutilations, although a majority disagree about that similarity (76%). Also, a certain percentage of respondents (15%) agrees with the availability of “separate swimming pools or times for swimming for women” as a favour of cultural rights and women privacy. This is a somewhat smaller percentage (22%) of those who disagree on the possibility of “having rules against some kind of publicity using women/men bodies as a good form of anti VAW politics.

## Honour Killings

In relation to honour killings, once again a minority shows attitudes that are not ideal in order to prevent and stop VAW. This is the case of 9% of participants that agrees that “the defence of women’s honour relating to body modesty, pre-marriage chastity and conjugal fidelity could prevent VAW”, or 11% that disagrees that “the value of honour, considered as men and family respectability linked the control on women life and their sexual behaviour, is the contrary of gender equality”. It would be interesting to analyse the relation between these kind of opinions and variables such as sex and age among others, but it is not possible due the low number of participants that answered the last questions of the survey. It is striking, also, to consider the high percentage of respondents (69%) who agrees that “honour killing’ is a label that is used to discriminate some minority groups of immigrants and refugees”. The same can be said about 36% of the participants that think that “honour killings concern only migrant women belonging to Muslim cultures”, revealing their ignorance of what is happening in the cultural majority context or what is worse and unacceptable xenophobic attitude towards Muslims.

Table 8: Opinions about veil and burqa

<b>When it is by her choice, hampering a woman to veil her head and to cover her body it is violence:</b>	
Strongly agree	29.1%
Somewhat agree	30.9%
Somewhat disagree	27.3%
Strongly disagree	12.7%
<b>Laws prohibiting clothes that cover woman’s head and body (such as burqa) constitute VAW:</b>	
Strongly agree	16.4%
Somewhat agree	25.4%
Somewhat disagree	32.7%
Strongly disagree	23.6%

**Veiled women are less vulnerable to many forms of VAW when they are outside their house:**

Strongly agree	7.3%
Somewhat agree	10.9%
Somewhat disagree	30.9%
Strongly disagree	47.3%

**Some types of legal genital aesthetic surgery are more invasive than some female genital mutilations:**

Strongly agree	3.6%
Somewhat agree	16.4%
Somewhat disagree	27.3%
Strongly disagree	49.1%

**The possibility of having separate swimming pools or times for swimming for women could be approved as a favour of cultural rights and women privacy:**

Strongly agree	1.8%
Somewhat agree	12.7%
Somewhat disagree	25.4%
Strongly disagree	56.4%

**The possibility of having rules against some kind of publicity using women/men bodies is a good form of anti VAW politics:**

Strongly agree	49.1%
Somewhat agree	21.8%
Somewhat disagree	5.4%
Strongly disagree	16.4%

## VAW and Prostitution

Some of the opinions and attitudes expressed by the surveyed professionals and volunteers are worrying from the abolitionist position toward prostitution held by the Spanish research team. That is the case, for example, of the 3 participants that agree that “voluntary prostitution is good for a society because it protects marriage”. As Table 9 shows, the position of the sample about prostitution is clearly split.

Table 9: Degree of agreement or disagreement with some statements on violence against women and prostitution

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**Voluntary prostitution is good for a society because it protects marriage**

Strongly agree	1.8%
Somewhat agree	3.6%
Somewhat disagree	8.9%
Strongly disagree	82.1%

### **Even when it is a personal choice, prostitution should be considered as a kind of VAW**

Strongly agree	41.1%
Somewhat agree	23.2%
Somewhat disagree	21.4%
Strongly disagree	14.3%

### **When it is a personal choice, prostitution empower women**

Strongly agree	7.1%
Somewhat agree	8.9%
Somewhat disagree	23.2%
Strongly disagree	55.4%

### **Prohibiting voluntary prostitution is a form of VAW**

Strongly agree	8.9%
Somewhat agree	26.8%
Somewhat disagree	28.6%
Strongly disagree	33.9%

### **It is, above all, the poverty that leads women to prostitution**

Strongly agree	17.9%
Somewhat agree	33.9%
Somewhat disagree	28.6%
Strongly disagree	19.6%

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## **Attitudes and Acts of VAW**

How do participants perceive certain attitudes and behaviours as cases of VAW? With the exception of “arrogant behaviour”, any included item is considered as examples of VAW at least for one of the participants in the survey.

Among the attitudes and behaviours chosen as most representative of VAW it is noteworthy the “limitation of personal freedom” (27%) and the “negation of the other as a person” (18%). As second in importance and in addition of the previous two, participants point out, “psychological coercion” (16%), “controlling the other’s life” (11%) and imposition of the sexual intercourse by an intimate partner (11%). Humiliation (14.55%) is selected by a majority of the participants as the third behaviour in order of importance that most clearly express VAW in intimate relationships.

## **Principles and Practices to Fight VAW**

We now briefly describe the importance respondents give to some principles and practices capable of providing eradication of VAW in our society.

The “recognition of equal rights and responsibilities in the family and in society” is the principle that receives more support, being selected by the 55% of the sample. The “recognition of women self-determination” (41%), “equal per-

sonal freedom in the life's choices for women and men" (39%) and "equality of rights both for women and men" (37.5%) are also principles that receive an important support by the participants.

Only 8% of the respondents give importance to affirmative action principle consisting of "positive special treatment and quotas for women and MREM people". The "recognition of cultural differences and minorities in legislation" (5%) and the "recognition of different ways to define family patterns in legislation" (0%) also receive very low or any support.

In summary, the participants seem to have clear that the most appropriate measures to eradicate gender violence is by the equalization of rights between women and men but not for positive discrimination by gender or ethnicity.

## **VAW and Women**

We now present data on the opinion of participants about certain statements regarding the role and responsibility of women in intimate partner violence.

Again, we can see how male chauvinism is able to penetrate the attitudes and opinions of professionals. In fact, 18% of the respondents agree that "especially in intimate relationships women are able to use the same violence as men" and 22% concedes that in "the modern equalitarian society women and men share the same social responsibility for their violent relationships".

Undoubtedly, this data show how important is the work to be done in relation to VAW. This is a type of work that it is not only necessary in relation to the society as a whole, but also with professionals and volunteers that promote social welfare.

### **4.3. Focus Groups**

Focus groups were the method selected to better comprehend migrant understanding of gender violence.

#### **Migrant Women's Perspective**

Focus groups with migrant women involved 12 women from the age of 20 to 50 years old.

As with the focus groups with men, we invited the women to speak about equality and not directly about GV. However, as soon as the conversation got underway, the subject of GV came immediately up. This is evidence that the link and relationship between equality of women and men and violence against women is clearly perceived.

As in past research experiences, (NO SOLO ES PEGAR 2007), we encountered several women who told the story of their case of GV in first person.

Table 10: Country of origin of migrant women

Country	Number of participants
Colombia	3
Ecuador	2
Brazil	1
Nigeria	1
Syria	1
Bolivia	2
El Salvador	1
Nicaragua	1

Specifically, a woman from Syria and another from Colombia shared their cases, and the latter added that one of the reasons that brought her to Spain was the chance to get away from an abusive relationship she had been putting up with for years. A third woman told at length how her mother suffered years of abuse. And lived situations of psychological abuse were described by a fourth woman.

The women gave numerous examples of what they meant by psychologically abused:

*it's when you're not worth anything, he doesn't let you out, he doesn't let you study (Syrian woman); that you're fat, you hear that a lot, that you don't know how to cook, that that's shit, they talk to you like that, physically he never abused me but verbally I was a disaster and with time you begin to realize that that's abuse.*

Women are surprised by the high number of GV victims in Spain and, particularly by the deaths «*here they kill the women, not in our country*». However, they thought that in Spain, generally there's more equality in employment issues:

*as far as work, well, I see a bit more gender equality. In our country it's harder to find a woman driving a bus", "you can tell there's a big difference on the professional level.*

During the first few minutes of the group discussion the question emerges about how there are also women who are abusive about their rights: «*but I think that one thing is for you to have your rights as a woman, and another is being abusive with the guy's space, you know?*». Where the idea appears that now men don't know very well what their place is (we'll go back to this issue when we talk about the causes of GV identified by the women):

*it's because they don't feel any more what phase they're in, to what point it is that they should or shouldn't do things", "that the Law is fine, but some respect should be shown for their decisions too.*

Comments worth noting about how some men change during the migration process with regards to their relationships to women:

*yes, they do change, here he's got to adapt to the laws", "because I've got friends whose husband was a male chauvinist over there but has changed here, they help with the children, they do the laundry and they do things.*

A woman from Nigeria points out: *«little by little things are changing, many women are studying and they don't beat the women».*

Although a few added other considerations to this point: *«I don't believe they change, I believe the system forces them clear and simple to take on another pattern of behaviour».* But change not only occurs to men, some women also experience interesting turnabouts upon arrival to Spain: *«as women, I feel that my self-esteem in a sense has gone up a lot", "I've become aware of things here, and I've claimed myself».*

With regards to women who are abused –an unfortunately recurrent topic –, one issue is the link with women's guilt:

*when they hit a woman, she feels guilty; she's the victim but she feels guilty that they hit her for something she did wrong", "you feel inferior and feel that you shouldn't ask for help because you're the one who's not functioning right and you're the one who has to change.*

Although many cannot understand why women endure the violence, and thoughts are heard along these lines: *«us women also allow... well, I don't know whether this is a mistake but it's as if us women we like being treated bad ...».* Although some women show their disagreement with this statement, the discourse moves ahead with the idea that women don't like or don't know how to be alone, and that's why they want a man and endure abusive situations: *«they get involved in relationships without knowing the men well enough so they won't be alone».*

## **Causes of Gender Violence**

At a certain stage in the discussion, the moderator will ask about the causes of violence against women, and this topic takes up an important part of the debate. Curiously enough, as with the men's groups, the issue of “respect” appears frequently. There is no time or space here to delve into this concept further but it might be interesting to focus future research on what we could gather from this concept, given that both women and men consider that if there were respect on both parts, the problem of abuse would disappear. It seems important to point



out that when they refer to “respect”, they do so not only with regards to women and men but to family relationships in general (ex: parents/children) and they link it clearly to a sort of lack or crisis in values:

*children no longer have respect for their elders, for their parents, their grandparents, now since we're in a more liberal world where you can't correct your children anymore because if you correct them the police is after you, we're bringing up our children in a way that there is no father or mother figure, respect for adults and when they become adults well there won't be anyone that can stop them and there is no authority figure.*

This is no doubt an interesting issue, because emerging from this discourse there seems to be, at first sight, the idea that when there were “other values” and when there was “respect”, there was no violence against women, an assumption which is not sustained by data or by what we know of the history of humanity. Furthermore, wherever there may seem to be practically untouched “traditional values”, where male and female spaces are well predetermined and marked, women continue to suffer abuse: stoning, burning, genital mutilation, and so on, are still frequent practices in numerous latitudes of the planet.

The discussion continues with the topic of the possible causes for the perpetuation of violence against women:

- lack of communication in the couple:

*I believe that by talking people can come an understanding and so if, for example, in a house two of us work, then you choose and I cook or do the laundry, in other words, we share.*

This comment was followed by another woman who pointed out, however:

*because you can talk it over with your partner but there are women who don't have that choice. They open their mouths and get beaten at once.*

- Men have trouble accepting equality:

*well I think that men are having trouble accepting that women have the same equalitarian space, and this change is a frustration to them and they take it out on us... when the woman says 'that's it'... and these are my rights, and I take decisions even though I don't contribute with money, financially, but I take decisions because I work at home, and domestics, and that has to count...; the thing is that they have trouble accepting that we have – as they say here in Spain – the ovaries to be on our own. We get tired of being good, being tolerant, being mediators because we end up even being psychologists with them ... They have trouble accepting it because they don't have the courage we have and that's why they're furious, they feel their self-esteem is low because they don't*

*want to accept feeling on an equal level ... They want always to be the masters (...) and we are always submissive; (...) and when they see that you change, well, they don't like it.*

- Women endure the situation:

*talking with my mother I'd ask her but why did you allow it? I don't know, she says... because I was so in love, I loved him very much, I had five children ...; women put up with it because he's a man, and men are like that, and I can't destroy my family, because my children ...*

- The way children are educated:

*if a child sees his father beating up his mother, he grows up with those values; if you see movies like Cinderella and Snow White... the prince... and all those things we're filling the girl's head with that there's a prince; women make male chauvinists of men.*

- Men are afraid of women:

*I think they abuse us because they fear us, because we're strong, because we're perceptive, because we're intelligent. Men want to dominate what frightens them. I think abuse by men occurs because they very often feel inferior to women. It's a problem of inferiority... the first thing a man does is raise his voice, and the second is roll up his sleeve; and the freer we are, if we're working, if we've got our own money, the more afraid they are.*

- Men think they are superior:

*In my country, in Nigeria, men think that they are Gods, like superiors... a man doesn't cook, nor clean nor nothing... and the women serve like servants, like a slave ...*

One recurrent issue that always comes up when talking about gender violence (and not only with foreigners; with nationals and professional groups as well) concerns supposed abuse on the part of women. The following extract of the conversation includes three issues linked to this topic (there men are abused, women abuse, and “false charges” occur):

*I think it's pretentious to say that the only one deserving respect is the woman because men do too... in many situations I've attended men abused by women, I've seen women abuse of their position as women to try to harm a husband for whatever situation, mentioning aggressions that have never existed.*

## Solutions

In the last part of the conversation we wanted to explore possible solutions envisioned by the women to put an end to the severe problem of gender violence. Through group dynamics, they were asked to imagine that they had just won the elections, and as ministers of different Ministries they could do things to put an end to abuse. The following are the strategies expressed: laws, education, awareness-raising, information, strengthen values, police, empower consciousness-raising with men. Formulas for expressing these proposals are as follows:

*Pass a law that both for women and for men, work and home be more equitable, a Law and a sanction for whoever doesn't comply.*

*That an attempt be made at schools to change the boys and girls for a just society.*

*Police should get a bit more involved too, put more Police on the street.*

*Give more information to people who don't have it.*

*A Programme that could go to the homes and talk look, you've got this number, if that happens to you give a call... something more efficient because here we also hear a lot about women of 70, 80 years old getting killed and they never spoke out against their husbands, because this abuse is not new, it comes from way back. The problem is women also get used to the abuse.*

*Training, education, giving more information to raise awareness among women.*

*It's easier to educate than to re-educate. When the men are old and we want to re-educate them then it's more complicated.*

*If I were the Minister of Education I would propose changes in Programmes starting with childhood, approach it from the children. Work and get the children to share toys. And then with adolescents and for men, married couples, I'd spread the information... like holding talks like this one now.*

*Make Laws known*

*Advertising, too, at the city-council level; for us, getting information by mail is good, to each house, about laws, courses, create them so that they know too, because I think they're also part of this, and raise their awareness.*

It is clear from the answers expressed that women demand government intervention, from public authorities; that these problems we face are not of a private nature that should be solved within each family, in each home. Regarding the issue of resources, we are brought to the Syrian woman and what she things about men going to prison: «before I had a problem with him, now I have lots of problems with everyone». Also with regards to resources, the topic of restraining orders is brought up:

*and if they impose a restraining order of whatever meters... I believe it works in some cases but in these cases of abusers, that doesn't work for them.*

The role of judges:

*there's one thing I just can't get into my mind , how can you explain that a judge has the courage to hand the children over to an abusive father? Who's to guarantee that this father won't treat his children harmfully?*

If we had to point out a big difference between women and men's discourses, the latter did not admit their mistakes, their own faults; while in women guilt appears.

## Migrant Men's Perspective

As previously stated, two focus groups were organized where the participants were migrant men. They were contacted and recruited by CEPAIM with the stated goal of meeting and talking to each other about equality between women and men. No reference to gender violence was made before group participants met.

18 men participated in total on a voluntary basis, 8 in the first group and 10 in the second. The main characteristics of the participants are summarized in table 1. They all spoke fluent or understandable Spanish. They had been living in Spain for durations ranging from a few months to ten years. Most were married or had partners. Almost half of them had left their partners and children in their country of origin. More than half of the group was unemployed when the focus groups were held. All those employed had jobs below their qualifications.

Table 11. Country of origin, age and education of the migrant men participating in the focus groups

Group	Participant alias	Country of origin	Age	Studies
1	CHO	Morocco	33	Primary education
1	SER	Senegal	43	Master
1	BAK	Mali	35	—
1	YVO	Congo	40	College
1	MOH	Algeria	46	Bachelor student
1	RIC	Nigeria	32	Professional education
1	JOH	Ecuador	44	Secondary Education
1	JAV	Ecuador	38	—
2	IBR	Guinea Conakry	28	College
2	WIL	Venezuela	29	Secondary education
2	MOM	Morocco	38	Secondary education
2	INU	Ghana	35	Secondary education
2	CHE	Senegal	40	College
2	MAM	Senegal	44	Secondary education
2	MUS	Liberia	35	Professional education
2	ISI	Cameron	34	—
2	ANT	Guinea Conakry	28	College
2	JUL	Ecuador	52	Secondary School

## Topics to Be Discussed in the Focus Groups with Men

The script followed in the focus groups was the same for men and women. Topics to be discussed were: 1) the participants' understanding of equality between women and men; 2) their definition of gender violence; 3) their thoughts on the causes of violence against women; 4) their ideas about how to fight violence against women.

### Men's Focus Groups Discourse

With two focus groups, we reached discourse saturation. In fact, the similarities in structure and content of the discussions held in the two focus groups were remarkable.

The facilitator of the focus group perceived the participants' discourse as sincere. The fact that the facilitator was also men could help this. He also did his best for remembering participants that true opinions were looked for.

### Gender Equality

The first topic to be discussed (equality between women and men) led to a first general agreement that, regardless of the sex, there are no differences between women and men and, therefore, they should have equal rights.

*The only thing that sets us apart is physiology, they can give birth, and we cannot. From there, the rest is equal; we have two eyes, a nose, a mouth (JAV).*

*I think that both women and men are equal in almost every respect. That both women and men have equal rights (JUL).*

It was the feeling of the facilitator of the two men's focus groups that some of these initial comments were tinged of social desirability. But it was only at first, because, some nuances soon emerged out of this apparent agreement on equality between men and women. In fact, some participants, especially but not only those of Muslim faith and from the Maghreb, qualified their egalitarian speech by making remarks about the "natural order of the things" and "divine will".

*They may be equal in anything, but there are things He has given, as I believe in God, that God has given. I believe that nature cannot be changed and nobody will be able to change it. For example, in their sex, in their speech, in their body, everything (CHO).*

*I agree with what you are saying. There are things we cannot change ... I don't know how to say this, the nature that belongs to God cannot be changed (BAC).*

*That is, there is a difference, we are different not only maternally but also physically (IBR).*

These were the first signs of ambivalent sexist attitudes (Swin, Aikin, Hall and Hunter 1995) that became evident as the discussion progressed. Occasionally, these attitudes were benevolent, establishing differences between women and men by saying, for example, that women are more competent to properly raise children or more emotional and sensible than men.

*Now men look after children and children do not get well educated, because the person who really educates a child is the woman, it is the mother. If you don't do your job within a marriage, things will not work (...). But each person has their little job fixed, firm and clear (CHO)*

*Men are capable of doing more harm to humanity than women (IBR).*

In other instances, attitudes expressed a clear hostility toward women, especially in those cases when rights of women and men were discussed in relation to partner conflict situations or, as underlined later in this report, when talking about gender violence.

*We know that women always lose their temper quickly. Then, when they lose their temper they get out of control. So, here a woman has to learn, for example, that if there is a husband at home she must respect him, you know? Because there are things you must not do (ANT).*

The existence of gender role differences was recognized by the participants and the idea that these differences were greater in the past as well as in their countries of origin than in Spain was clearly stated.

*That has to be seen in different contexts. In the context of Europe or Africa, things are very different. We know that here (in Spain and Europe), before this situation of equality between women and men, a tremendous inequality existed (...) it has been a process of struggle for male power to reach this situation. (...) it's a process that will continue (...) The African context is another matter. It is a problem of religion and culture and that makes things go sometimes different. Women have in mind that they are inferior to men, especially in rural areas. In urban areas education is different because it makes people aware that some rights must be defended. I think it's a matter of context (MAM).*

*I want to say that they are two different projects, because equality cannot be absolute. It depends on the specific society (MOH).*

*When you ask grandparents, aged 80 or 70, what they say is women at home and men at work (JAV).*

*In my country, women have nothing to say (YVO).*

In this regard, participants voiced diverse opinions ranging from positive valuations to a more or less clear rejection of differences between men and women.

For some of them, the traditional gender differences and relations were perceived as ideal ones:

*The primary obligation of man in marriage is to work and to feed his woman. Right now things have evolved a bit more. But I do not have the right to force my wife to work. Well, if she wants to work, she can work (...) My ideal? Well, I wish things could be like that. Hopefully we as men could sustain women to continue their normal lives at home (...) Currently things are not going in the right direction (...) so many laws, so many (...) talks like this... (CHO).*

Other participants, while stating their general agreement with gender equality, stressed the logic of gender differences between their home countries and Europe appealing to economic, social and religious considerations.

*So I think there are many values that come into play: cultural, social, religious, all of them must be taken into account, but I think everything is on track (SER).*

The latter respondent, by using a personal example, showed the change in mentality that the migration process causes in some African men.

*Honestly, I've lived four years in Spain, and I've changed my mind about women. It has helped me to reconsider many things (...) How to treat women ... why women should have the same rights men have (...) (SER).*

It seems that the migration experience makes some immigrant men change their mind towards a more egalitarian perspective. By contrast, the traditional male chauvinist discourse of other immigrant men seems to be reinforced when they leave their country. Unfortunately the latter type of men tends to be the loudest and visible, while the egalitarian type tends to be silenced.

## **Gender Violence**

The term 'gender violence' was *naturally referred* by several participants in both groups before the facilitator raised the topic of violence against women as it had been planned by the research team. The person coded as SER did so when explaining the reasons why he decided to participate in the focus group<sup>1</sup>. The rest employed the term in the context of their talking about equality between women and men.

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<sup>1</sup> He is now enrolled in Higher education and his curiosity for development cooperation made gender issues of interest to him.

*So I think that (...) leaving the girls with the women at home (...) will be removed (...) for example, genital mutilation of girls, ablations are ways to violate the rights of women (CHE).*

*Women are not slaves; we are here to fight for equality for women, because there is also a problem of violence (YVO).*

*[for example] a woman is talking, arguing at home, she gives you a slap and you cannot do anything. But you would do the same to her and she calls the police and the same day you are in jail. That happens, and there is not equality for the man. (...)so I thought that equality depends on what you seek (...). Because at work, with the same certificate (...) the man earns more (RIC).*

It seems clear that for these immigrant men, as it was for the immigrant women participating in this research, violence towards women is clearly related to gender issues and, specifically, to gender equality and personal rights. But male and female participants were mistakenly inclined to understand that gender violence is both against men and women.

- I have not seen any law about that.*
- About what?*
- About women who mistreat men too (RIC).*

*There is a problem because I think the law automatically punishes the man (...). It may be that the woman is guilty. So gender violence may be reciprocal (MOH).*

*I know many men, I'm not just talking about the immigrants, I am talking about the Spanish. They are really suffering because of women. But they do not enter in the surveys. Surveys only include the women (ISI).*

On the same level, they also showed surprise and astonishment at the number of murders of women seen in Spain.

*I share MOH's view. Family disintegration also plays an important part in this issue, for example, as Africans we see ourselves as very sexist, but it is really unusual to see the kind of violence we see here, killing women ... (YVO).*

A “fact”, the latter, that some African participants explained by resorting to cultural differences, among other issues, and specifically to the role of family neighbourhood and even religious leaders mediation.

*Family mediation is very important – neighbourhood mediation, because “family” structures are very important in a society. In Africa, for example, in sub-Saharan Africa, which I know about, belonging to structures is really important, the family and the neighbourhood are really important. They give you guarantees. So it's really strange, as MOH has said, to see a married couple with problems managing those problems*



*alone. The family is always aware of the problem, and intervenes. If the family splits up, neighbours get involved. In the Muslim faith, even the Imam, the head of a mosque, may get involved and mediate to solve the problem... Here, in the Western world, people... you live with your girlfriend in a house, they hit each other... everyone is in their own house, people don't get involved. At least a neighbour sometimes picks up the phone and calls the police. Before the police arrive, things have happened... (YVO).*

But similarities between the views of immigrant men and women on this topic seem to end here. In fact, men's definitions of gender violence were more restrictive than women's. Their definitions, with exceptions such as the one quoted below, did not usually include behaviours like coercive control or stalking. Moreover, most of the participants were ready to add some comments to their definitions that without denying the existence of physical and psychological violence toward women presented men as the actual victims of the conflict between men and women. As it has been pointed out before, by doing so they expressed an overt hostile sexist attitude. A similar phenomenon has been pointed out by Baobaid (2000; 2006) in a series of research taking place in Yemen.

In short, although men's discourse agrees, at least in principle, with the need to promote and ensure gender equality, it tends to underline fewer scenarios of inequality than women's discourse does. Moreover, arguments for questioning equality are quickly incorporated both in a benevolent or hostile manner, as mentioned before.

## **Causes and Factors of Gender Violence**

The idea to have a detailed talk with men about causes and factors that may lead to VAW has been an almost impossible expectation of the researchers during the development of the focus groups.

When MREM men are asked about the causes of VAW it seems that the question is nonsense. In fact, the same two main and combined answers from the specific question are used by the participants in the two researched groups.

On the one hand, for these men, the problem of VAW is derived from the laws in general and from VAW laws in particular.

*Nowadays, people get married for love, and then they end up killing each other... why?... Because the problem is the law, the law in general. We need to make a small change to the law, I'm not saying we should remove the law, no... no, man, we have to do what we're talking about, to make the law really equal between men and women(CHO).*

*It is true that women are suffering gender violence, this is a reality, but I also think that there is another side of the problem... in this moment many women are making an abuse of the law in their benefit. This is also a reality (MAM).*

On the other hand, the violence of men against women is a kind of reaction created by a previous aggression (physical or psychological assaults on the part of women) or defenceless situations that make men feel cornered:

*Whenever men feel threatened, they end up killing women, because they'll lose their house, their job, they'll lose it, so where do they go? This is also maltreatment, the law, recently the law only favours women which means maltreatment for men too (JON). Why do we hear so much about what men are doing?...because women do lots too, women also maltreat men (RIC).*

Again, participants appeal to the respect and specifically to the lack of respect to explain men violent behaviour (see verbatim ANT, below).

### **Solutions: Is There Anything that We as Men Can Do to Fight VAW?**

If the discourse about causes and factors of VAW has been difficult to elicit, the discussion about its potential solutions has been even harder. When men are asked about what they can do to fight VAW, they do not answer the question or they tend to offer stereotyped answers. They come back to their references about the law, they present themselves again as victims, or they just say, men has to defend women.

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### 5.1. The Survey

The questionnaire was translated into Finnish in spring 2011 and delivered to the informants in June – October. The questionnaires were brought and gathered in person and the visits to the organizations provided valuable discussions and contacts for the research team. Some of the questionnaires were not completely filled. In some cases, the insufficient language skill explained the missing answers, but there were also questions, which seemed difficult for the respondents. Some women wrote comments on the margins, explaining why they found the questions difficult to answer. Furthermore, a couple of questions received criticism in these comments. For example, the question that juxtaposed women's circumcision and genital plastic surgery was considered insulting for the victims of genital mutilation. In this question, the amount of missing answers was 17%.

The questionnaire was distributed in 16 different organizations, which included authorities, NGOs and other types of associations in Helsinki. Only women gave responses. We received back 88 filled questionnaires. Of the 88 responses, 36 came from the public sector (authorities), 40 from NGOs, 10 from private sector and 2 from the Finnish Lutheran Church. The authorities included, for example, social workers, officials working with migrants or migration issues, policewomen and health care professionals. The NGO's were focused on such topics as, for example, helping the victims of family violence, migrant organizations and assistance for refugees. Questionnaires were also gathered in an organization, which includes vocational school of health care, support for unprivileged groups and has a high profile in the work with migrants. Given that the eastern parts of Helsinki have a relatively high percentage of migrants, it was selected as a focus area and, for example, the responses from the social and health care professionals were predominantly gathered there.

#### Description of the Sample

The majority of the respondents were Finnish citizens (86%) and were born in Finland (78%). Most of the non-Finnish people worked in migrants' NGOs while among authorities almost all of the respondents were born in Finland. As some respondents stated, the questionnaire was relatively long and it took almost half an hour to fill it. Therefore it can be assumed that the women who were will-

ing to spend that time were already interested in the topics and therefore, do not perhaps represent in all respects an “average” policewoman or a social worker.

The respondents were also relatively highly educated. 40% had a university degree even though within authorities, the majority had a vocational training, which is required, for example, for policewomen, social and health care workers. The age distribution as well as the time of working had a relatively even dispersion.

The majority of the respondents had many migrants as clients (59%) and refugee women (49%), while only a minority (17%) had many ethnic minority women among their clients. The clients’ most common countries of origin were Somalia (37.5%) and Russia (28.4%). The most common request of the migrant, refugee and ethnic minority (MREM) women was counselling and support concerning violence. However, the most difficult requests to fulfil were such practical issues as vocational guidance, professional insertion (17%) and housing (12.5%). Apparently, such structural issues complicating migrants’ life in Finland were conceived as being beyond the control of even professionals working with migrants.

The vast majority has received a request from migrant women to be attended by a woman (84%) and the professionals were very unanimous that this request should be filled. Only 1 respondent stated that such a request should be denied. However, there were also some missing answers with such comments as “depends on the request or the situation”.

The respondents also recognized the importance of understanding and respecting other cultures in their responses to the things that professionals working with migrants should have. The most common theme mentioned was training on cultural differences (38.6%). Furthermore, the second most common choice for the respondents was the support of interpreters and cultural mediators (27.3%).

## Questions on Training and Working Methods

Little over half of the respondents have received training on violence against women over the last three years. Nevertheless, those who received training were most often women with higher education and working in NGOs while the majority of the authorities did not have such training. Surprisingly, the authorities working with migration issues have received training on violence against women least.

The topics concerning violence against women and MREM women that the professionals wished they had been trained on were most often practical everyday issues, such as violence against women relating to life and work experience of MREM women. In contrast, such more theoretical issues, urban safety debates or the typologies of violence against women gathered very few mentions. About the topics concerning violence against women, family violence, which

was also considered as the most common type, was the issue most professionals wished they had been trained on. However, also issues which are somewhat newer in the Finnish context were also mentioned. The second most often mentioned topics were trafficking of women and forced prostitution, and the third was honour crimes and killings to defend the reputation of family or men. Among the topics that the professionals would like to have training on, the fourth place held institutional violence, though this topic mainly interested women working in NGOs and with a higher education.

The respondents considered cooperation among different organizations important in facing violence against women. The most common response to the question on effective patterns against it was networks of public and private actors (34%).

### **Questions on Risks of Violence and Definitions of Violence**

The majority of the professionals, who answered to our survey, considered that violence against women in Finland has become more visible (66%). According to the respondents, the most important reason for this is mass media and women, who report these cases more often than in the past. The work of institutions was also considered significant. Interestingly, the role of NGOs was considered more important by the officials than by women working in these premises. Politicians were least credited in making the violence against women visible and especially the effort of male politicians was seen as significant by very few professionals.

The opinions in the question whether violence against women has increased in Finland or not were divided, but the majority thought that it has increased. Women who answered to this survey were well aware that the person who most frequently commits violence against women was the women's partner or other person close to them. Only 7% argued that the most common violator was a stranger.

The question on the most typical case of violence against women turned out to be difficult to interpret, because of the inaccurate instructions of the questionnaire. While some of the respondents seem to understand it as referring to the relative percentage between different groups, others were thinking about the number of cases. Nevertheless, many respondents obviously wished to discredit the idea of MREM people as more violent than Finns. The commonest type of violence in intercultural context was mentioned "native man against native woman". The second most common type was migrant man against migrant woman".

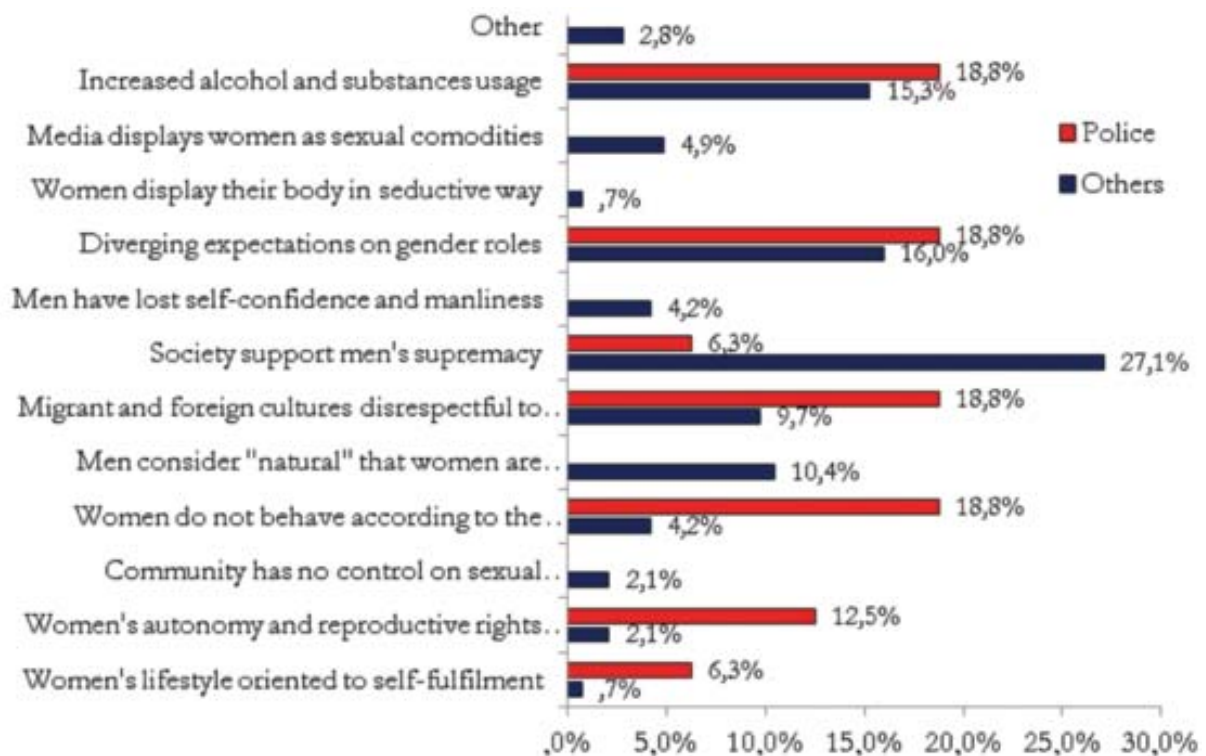
Though domestic violence was considered to be the most typical type of violence against women, the fact that physical and psychological violence are interconnected was also brought up in psychological violence among the three most widespread types and situations regarding violence against women. How-

ever, the most typical forms of violence against women were not necessarily considered as the most dangerous ones for the whole society. Institutional violence was seldom mentioned among the three most typical type of violence against women (1.2%), but it was considerably more often considered to be the most dangerous one (10.2%). Interestingly, it was mentioned as such by both the women working in NGOs and by the authorities. Though in general the age of the respondents made very little impact in the survey, in this question the institutional violence was mentioned most often by younger women, born after 1980. Also the marginalization of women in decision making places was chosen as the most dangerous type of violence against women relatively often (11.4%).

Within the answers to the question on what explains violence against women best, feminist position of many of the professionals, who answered to this survey became evident. The most common response was that the “society supports men’s superiority” (30.7%). The opinion was shared both within women working in NGOs and by the authorities, though the policewomen selected that explanation not as frequently (6.3%) compared to others. In several questions policewomen held feminist values less often than other respondents. They were also more often critical of other cultures.

The question about what type of women are most at risk of gender violence received several angry comments from women who considered it as putting the blame on women who have suffered violence. However, the most common re-

Figure 7: Explanation of VAW



sponse was “women who are psychologically dependent on their partners (44.3%). In describing men who commit violence, predisposition to the patterns of violent behaviour was seen as a crucial factor. The most common characterizations were “man being predisposed to violent behaviour” (29,5%) and “man, who suffered violence in childhood” (20.5%). This kind of reasons, which referred to people’s environment, were much more present than descriptions of personal characteristics or the men’s vision of the world.

Most of the respondents did not think that all women are at risk of violence irrespective of their social and cultural differences (70.5%). Even though statistics clearly show that women are much more often the victims of intimate violence than men, 41% of the respondents agreed that men and women are at the same risk of suffering for their partner’s violence. The answers may reflect the impact of the so called “men’s movement”, which has vociferously criticized the study of gendered violence in recent years. These critics have argued that the discussion of violence against women has belittled the amount of the male victims of family violence or that in these discussions the verbal forms of violence used by women should be taken into account. A group, which most often disagreed with the statement, was policewomen. Undoubtedly, the reason for this can be found in their profession and the fact that in their work policewomen mainly deal with cases of physical violence.

Liberal values were predominant within the women who filled in the questionnaire and, for example, a vast majority considered the lack of contraceptives (89.8%) and the lack of legal abortion (85.3%) to be a form of social violence. Much less understanding the respondents showed to such features of other cultures as, for example, arranged marriages. 78.4% agreed that arranged marriages is a form of social violence even if the women would agree with it. However, even though many were critical of such practices within minority cultures, they also shared a conviction that the state should be active in guaranteeing equal rights to all women despite their cultural background. The majority opposed the prohibitions of veiling and considered such prohibitions (71.6%) and the prohibition of burqa (61.4%) as a form of social violence. 65.9% of the respondents agreed that having a separate swimming pool could be approved for cultural rights and women’s privacy.

The attitudes toward LGBT minorities were quite liberal. The majority (82.9%) considered prohibiting same sex marriages as a form of social violence and disagreed that gay and lesbian couples entails more risk of intimate violence than heterosexual couples (62.5%). The respondents held very similar views in these questions despite their age or country of origin.

Also, many professionals did not seem to admit that in the Finnish society migrant women are often in a disadvantaged position. Alarming, this was especially common within authorities working with migrants or refugees. Of the women working in MREM organizations, 12 agreed that MREM women experience harassment and violence in workplaces more often than native women and

Figure 8: Types of organization

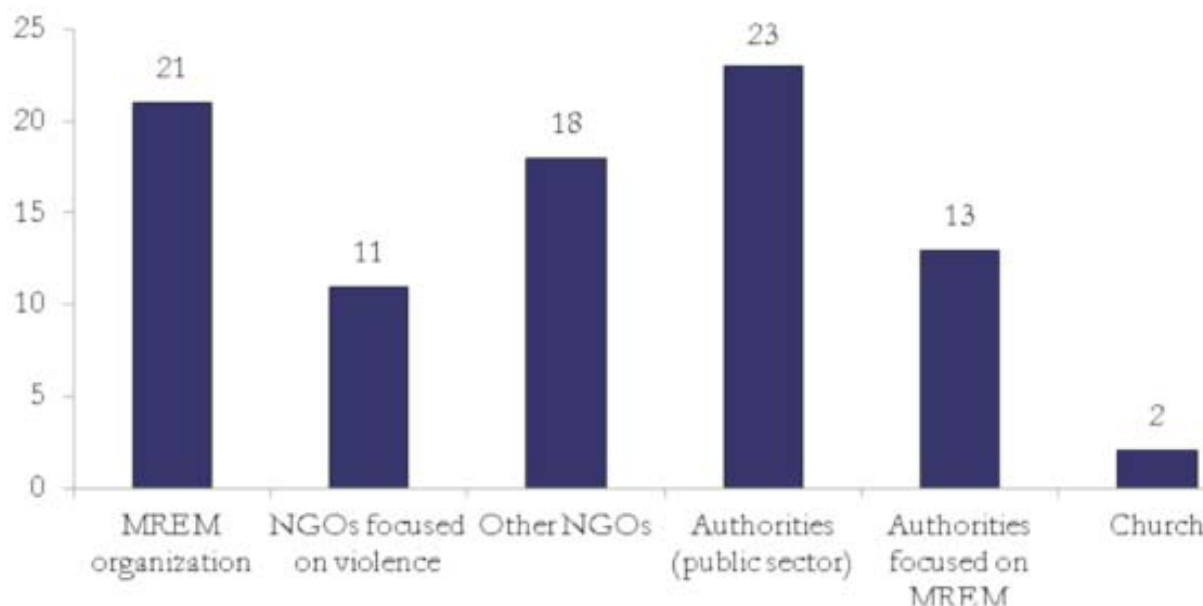
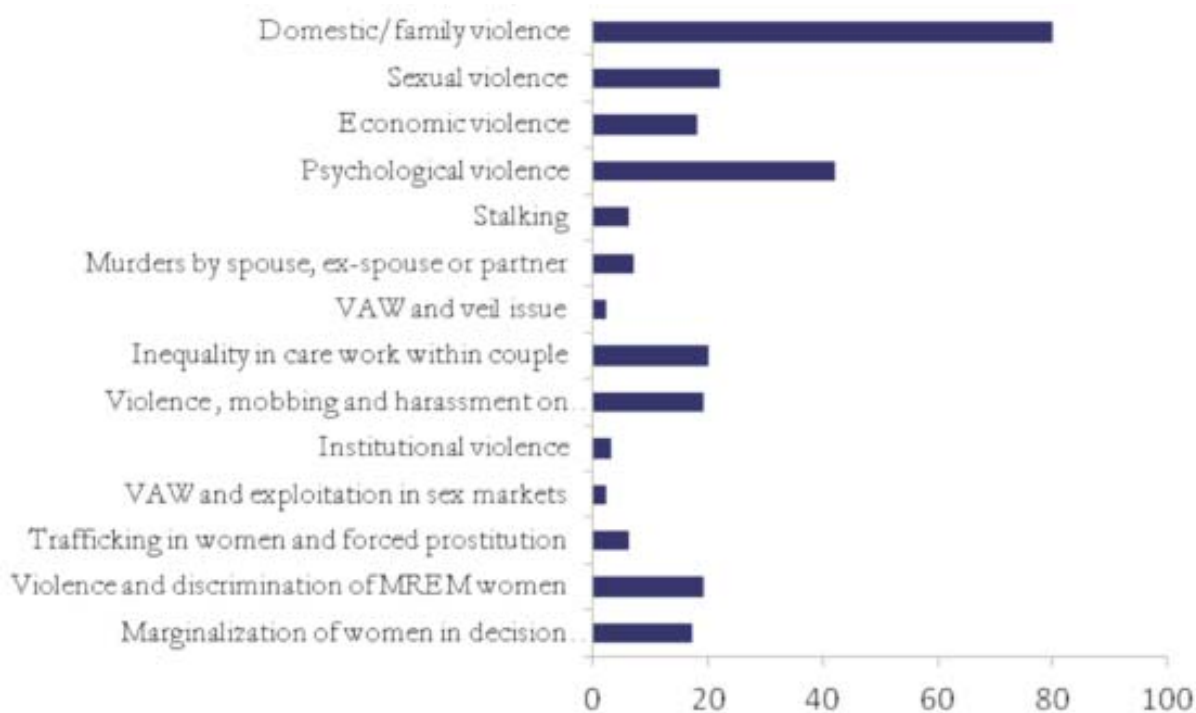


Figure 9: The most widespread types and situations relating to violence against women



only 3 disagreed, the respective numbers within authorities, focused on MREM were 6 and 7. Authorities in general were also less inclined to agree that MREM women are more vulnerable to violence against women because of their legal status and administrative rules if compared to women who are working in NGOs.



Honour and chastity as important values, especially linked to women, were seen rather negatively. The majority agreed that the social relevance of honour entails the risk of violence against women (69.3%) and that linking honour as a value to women's life and sexuality is contrary to gender equality (88.6%). Only a minority believed that the defence of women's honour and chastity could prevent violence against women (12.5%).

The suspicious attitude towards some cultures became again evident in the questions on honour killings. The majority argued that in Finland honour killing concern only migrant Muslim women (55.7%) and only a majority considered the term "honour killing" to be a label that is used to discriminate some migrant minority groups (60.2%).

Very few respondents (6.8%) agreed with the statement: "when being a personal choice, prostitution is a social need that defends family". In general, prostitution received very little understanding and was seen very critically. Its prohibition was not considered to be a form of social violence (75%) and it was not believed that prostitution as a personal choice could be empowering to women (79.5%). The respondents were unanimous that poverty is the main reason that leads women to prostitution (92.1%).

The most important principle of action and policies to end violence against women was considered to be equal dignity for women and men (28.4%). Much less support received such conservative explanations as "the capacity of acting with any overpower in a relationship" (3.4%) or "reciprocal respect acting in two different social roles" (4.5%).

## 5.2. The Focus Groups

### **The Selection of the Participants: Group Formation and Composition**

The participants of the six focus groups were professionals, i.e. specialist and activists and were selected from relevant organisations and institutions both in the service producing sector and the public sector, and, moreover, women from migrant, refugee, and national minority groups: Russian, Somali and Roma women. They represented the main minority groups among the Finnish residents, also in the sense that they are badly exposed to exclusion and violence, according to the Ombudsman's (2011) and EU-Midis report (2009). The women involved were in their 20s-50s.

The meetings, held between September – November 2011 and March 2012, were arranged at the Aleksanteri Institute; coffee, sandwiches and fruits were served. The discussions lasted two-three hours; they were taped and transcribed; the length of the transcripts was 119 pages.

The discussions were moderated by the project personnel Dr Aino Saarinen and Dr Kaarina Aitamurto; the team was completed by Dr Airi Markkanen, a majority woman herself, who worked in the field among Roma women for twen-

Table 12: Focus groups in Finland

Focus group	Who	Number, origin of participants	Interviewers (interview language)
First focus group 9.7. 2011	Women professionals: native and migrant origin, NGOs	3 (2 of migrant origin, 1 of Finnish majority)	2 researchers (Finnish)
Second focus group 10.26. 2011	Roma women professionals: NGOs	2 (2 of Finnish Roma minority)	1 researcher, 1 Roma specialist (Finnish)
Third focus group 10.7. 2011	Roma women	3 (3 of Finnish Roma minority)	2 researchers, 1 Roma specialist (Finnish)
Fourth focus group 11.2. 2011	Russian women	2 (1 returnee, 1 migrant)	2 researchers (Finnish, occasionally Russian)
Fifth focus group 3.6. 2012	Somali woman	1 (refugee)	2 researchers, 1 Roma specialist (Finnish)
Sixth focus group 11.2. 2011	Mixed group: minority and majority professionals, activists	3 (1 migrant, 1 Finnish Roma minority, 1 Finnish majority)	2 researchers, 1 Roma specialist (Finnish – a few words in English)

ty years (now among travelling EU Roma). The team was older than the interviewed women i.e. in their 40s-60s. Thanks to the mediator, convening with Roma did not take extra efforts. However, the formation of other groups proved difficult. As to Somali women, a women scholar active among Somalis since 1990s managed not to mobilise them, even after several tries; finally, three young women were supposed to attend the session but two stood at the very back in the last minute; altogether only one participated. As to Russians women, irrespective of a group insider person's effort and the researchers' long-term contacts to this major minority group (of relevance to the Institute's focus on Eastern Europe) only two interviewees attended. In sum, it was useful to attend the action part organised by the Monika Association: involvement of women from Somalia and other sub-Saharan Africa countries and Russia made views more multi-faceted (this will be analysed in research reports). (See also the report by Jekaterina Tantt).

### Recruitment, Ethical Problems and Methodology

The call for attending a focus group was sent with an attachment on the rights of the interviewees regarding anonymity and confidentiality – excluding the Roma who according to our mediator would have been “alarmed” by this official approach. The permission to record and transcribe the tape was asked in each group. At first, we presented (anew) the project and mentioned the stake-holder

seminar to make the participants included to the process and able to follow its results. Also, we promised to send the summary report to them, as to all the participants to the survey. Some interviewees (Roma especially) asked more or less directly for some compensation; this was due to the fact that (as mentioned) the information letter had not been sent to Roma. Also, we emphasised the fact that we approach them as representing their communities. Quite often however the interviewees took up experiences in their own life; evidently, the decision to attend the group was taken to mediate experiences of discrimination and exposure to violence. Anonymity and confidentiality was a concern for many interviewees (except in the group of professionals).

The discussions were carried out along the pre-formulated theme interview form, which was modified a little at every occasion. The themes dealt with both problems and solutions but they were not direct replies to the survey results but more like open questions – on attitudes of the majority; situation of various vulnerable groups (e.g. marriage migrants, refugees); integration, networking *versus* isolation; the most flagrant and the most difficult form of violence to recognise; institutional violence; negative views on migrant/minority men. Lastly, we asked an open question: what is it that we did not cover but you think should be discussed? We tried to make sure that all of them had their space; in the end, this varied especially with the Roma group.

### **Focus Group with Professionals**

The three interviewees came from NGOs working with all migrant women, refugee women, and travelling Roma and undocumented people. Two of them were originally from abroad (Estonia, Romania), and they both were married with a Finn now. The discussion proceeded very much on interviewees' conditions, and quite often they "corrected" our formulations and emphasised their own expertise. All of them were committed, meaning they were activists, with 5-20 years' experience of work.

Discussion focused in particular on institutional violence, seen from the perspectives of NGOs. The interviewees stressed the limitations of their possibilities and powers and criticised the public control and service system, especially the practices of refugee reception from the institutions: they are not really interested on recognising violence in the country of arrival or at least not doing much or enough. Often women get only *panadoolia* i.e. painkillers during the overdue application process. Formally everything is in order but human rights are not respected as a matter of fact.

*It would be possible to make another interpretation but in general it is the most extreme (negative) one. (...) I just talked about raped women-asylum seekers. (Raping) seems not to be any ground to be taken into consideration. Authorities see it like "they all have been raped, all have been exposed to raping", so that is not anything special*

(gives a laugh). *Something cynical in minds of authorities, decision-makers, they do not see those women as individuals.*

NGOs feel mostly helpless: the gap between incomers' needs and their resources is too wide, and they are not capable of developing their services. It is about the priorities. Women's networks have tried to contact the minister of finance but the response was that there is "no time". "Men sit on money". The best way of helping women was living isolated, in vast and peripheral areas, and training the personnel dealing with basic services, kindergarten, school, dentist. Having a rotating social worker trained on VAW could work but for now NGOs must make a choice.

*It is really important that we think how we reach out to those ... who do not dare, who do not know about their rights and opportunities. But I see it as a big thing that we cannot help even those who seek for help. That there are no such structures, no money, no enough of shelters. Authorities do not want to help, do not want to see, do not want to interfere, and the structures are so heavy, procedures so incredibly long, restraining order so formal. The victim herself is responsible for her own safety. (...) I see that we have to help those who cry for help (first).*

Marriage among migrants and family reunion are cases themselves. Critique turned to group-internal problems. NGOs have to confront the important issues on all agendas, in media and social media, in politics – thanks to "migration-critics": arranged and/or forced marriages. Arranged marriages seem common (or not an exception), and the worst is that women function as "travel tickets". Occasionally, the motivation for bringing a young woman from the country of origin is to guarantee her "purity". Intervention is not as simple as it may seem but it would be immoral not to intervene: women have the right to know about local legislation and practices. Moreover, majority people are often involved as well. Wives are brought to the "middle of nowhere", there is no common language, only body language. Maybe economic self-interests are at stake as gendered age-related asymmetries are not rare. There are fake marriages between a Finnish woman and a foreign man, e.g. an asylum seeker, and many times the woman is much older than the man:

*But if it is the other way round, no worry! A man in his 60s and a Thai woman in her 20s ... that's nothing.*

As to travelling EU Roma, they are no asylum seekers nor marriage migrants but "tourists". Therefore, even a local emergency service can turn them away. The unit for medical and social help works in conjunction with the Deaconess Institute for the most minimal public and NGO funding. Half of these "beggars" – harassed on the streets – are women, often transnational mothers. Sexu-

al and reproductive information, advice and help should therefore be a priority. However, the decision on contraception can belong to the whole family i.e. the husband and the head of the extended family. As belonging to the community is vital, women cannot risk being excluded. Also, professionals must often deal with false “knowledge” of sexual health and contraception in particular. For instance, “from the coil, you get cancer”. Self-evidently, being on pills is difficult when travelling. Not to mention the sexual double standard. The special problem is that spoken knowledge is the main and best relied source of information.

### **Focus Group with Roma Professionals**

The interview was made together with the mediator. The participants, in their 40s, who had links to various Roma associations, worked on a social empowerment project. They were talkative but mentioned many times how the issues of their work are sensitive.

Of interest was the special “way of learning” that should be a starting point in all development work:

*The history of Roma is absolutely different, Roma’s way of learning is different, the way how they learn is different, how they provide and use information and knowledge, that is so different as compared to the majority population. It is a culture where interaction and oral knowledge has such a great significance. Moreover, there are the taboos that give a different sense to gestures and movements, the habitus and taking one’s space. The majority people do not detect it. (We ourselves) are in-between the clients and the staff, we speak to both, on two channels simultaneously.*

They did not want to make a distinction between majority and minority cultures. The Finnish culture too is violent but the Roma culture conceals violence, especially in close relationships. The hinder for seeking help from outside is linked to lack of trust in the authorities due to long-lasting violence against Roma, for both men and women.

*We’ve always been in our own gang, which has solved the problems, endured and suffered. Physical discipline is to a great extent part of hard life. To get help from outside is only coming now. Spanking has been a way to put the children in order. We do not have the same concept of violence as the majority. The issue has been raised up only lately.*

There are different “gangs” in different localities but as to the “Roma law”, the strict moral rules and “avoidance behaviour”, it is still a living practice which obliges everyone, and it is a special problem for women as the victim is considered guilty: the woman “provokes” violence with her own behaviour.

*The (Roma) law does not condemn rape, it does not condemn incest, suffering of the woman, the woman deserves it. This incomprehensible hierarchy is being protected where the woman has no place. (...) Think through how you were dressed up, did you go walking there, did you aggravate the man, why did you not say to the man “now peace”.*

The interviewees emphasised how difficult it is to define what constitutes gender violence. The majority culture now knows that leaving women without money is economic violence, not the Roma culture, where it will take the “next twenty years to realise this”. The same applies to the powers of the family, the community as a whole over the woman. It can be seen as violence over an individual. And “hello, what is mental violence?”

Bringing in human rights does not work although there are many of the Roma who want to make changes. The interviewees themselves questioned the demand for body-related and symbolic purity as it goes: women in their kitchens, cooking and doing laundry must follow these rules in detail.

The gendered division of tasks and the hierarchy exists in all ways. The woman is responsible for the whole network, her own family and the husband’s family while the man is responsible for the livelihood, the daily bread. The age is of importance but not in the same way as in many other parts of Europe. Adolescent Roma girls “do not have a childhood” but on the other hand they do not marry so early thanks to the school and the parents who go to get the girl back from the partner if she is very young, like 15. Also, they do not take care of younger siblings as in the old times, when Roma were “on the road”. A change related to sexual double morality has taken place: being a virgin is not (so) important anymore. Later, however, sexual double morality comes into the picture.

*A woman cannot leave in the same way as the man, with someone else. She is worse and deserves being punished, she has spoiled the reputation of the husband and the family, the children and all. That banking that happened in earlier times was really hard. When the woman has been “adulterous” her hair might have been cut, even if she has only met another man or only spoken to him on the phone. At worst this included cutting the hair. That happens extremely rarely today. This should not be spoken of.*

But women are exposed also to violence between families. Many times the woman has to flee. “She like the children has to be responsible for the vendetta between extended families, move away, cut all friendships, as obliged to give way, not able to choose where you move.” In this isolation there might be no one to turn to for help against intimate violence.

The communality pushes aside individuality, all human rights, and rebellion leads to exclusion. But disciplining girls and women takes place also in public spaces, even from both directions. A Roma girl does not walk through special places with drunkards and drug addicts because she can be forced to criminal actions. In addition, all Roma confront discrimination and harassment by the ma-

majority in shops, restaurants: they are denied access, treated as thieves – the guards and shop assistants follow at every step. Roma women in particular are one of the “visible minorities” not only for their dark skin colour but as they wear the traditional the long velvet skirt, colourful blouse and jewels. Men are exposed to violence in public spaces but they are not as easy to recognise by their clothing. Surprisingly, the appearance of Somali women has not made Roma women’s life easier in this respect.

If life goes very wrong, motherhood in prison is part of it. The interviewees have met the fifth generation of women there. How to arrange care of children is a problem. Small children can stay with the mother, for older ones she has to find care outside, with a relative maybe, or in an institution.

The interviewees criticise the Finnish society for not protecting women properly. The shelters do not give space to Roma culture, and there is no shelter which would be totally in hiding. The health system is as bad as it does not recognise symptoms of exposure to violence – headaches, migraines, depression. Staying one week in shelter, psychiatric hospital, and on medication does not help.

As to silence, another public already exists, probably among younger people in particular. On the internet many taboos between genders and generations are now discussed.

### **Focus Group with Roma**

The three participants were young, around 20s and 30s; two were single, one was married with children; “ordinary” women had links to religious Roma organisations. Everyone was wearing in the traditional clothes. Worth a mention is that in the Roma culture the age and generation matters: respect for elderly people is essential, and many taboo issues can be discussed only in a peer age and gender group. It may be that the composition of the interviewer group mattered too as we were of different generations. Throughout the discussion, the two younger ones echoed the older one. These interviewees did not themselves take up sensitive problems and issues first. The replies to our questions were often so selective and indirect that our cultural mediator tried to encourage them with comments that were like pieces of conversation from some earlier confidential discussions. Everyone was worried of anonymity.

The issue of identity was however taken up by the interviewees themselves, and with pride, in two respects: they were no immigrants but born Finnish citizens; on the other hand, as Roma women, their reference group was the Roma community, even in the first place. Changes have been happening, e.g. as to education, but there is something that is unaltered – the asymmetrical gender difference:

*Yes, there are similar issues [in our culture] they are such sensitive issues, many do not want to reply... everyone keeps them inside themselves. Maybe they are not capable of making a difference between what is right or wrong. (...) In our culture a woman is not*

*equal to a man, we do not have equality... we respect a man more than a woman. It is normal and not a bad thing. (...) It has to do with honour... and with that we are all religious people. It is said in the bible already that the man is the head of the household but in healthy way. It is important to make a difference between "healthy" and "non-healthy"... Someone may say that... why you respect the man and do not demand your own rights. (The younger ones: we clean the house that is our honour).*

Evidently, the most dangerous phase is indeed separation from a violent man. It may be that staying together is an easier option although living a life together with the children alone would be best. The women were conscious of hazards, long-term harassment and even a loss of life. In this occasion, the interviewees became even poetic – it was like talking about physical violence by only hinting to what happened: «*Someone who does not accept (the wife leaving) can even till his last breath of life fold her up ... it is an obsession*». The gendered asymmetry of rights and responsibilities – dealing with shame and honour, the concepts that became often mentioned – centred also round sexuality: men are free to come and go, and leave, but women must be tolerant and faithful, and living with a new man is a “big issue”.

As to violation of rights from the side of the majority and its institutions, the interviewees were aware of discrimination, typical experiences to Roma all over; “racism” was a concept they used often. They were familiar with harassment in public spaces – not only shops but also in restaurants which they themselves can access, to sing karaoke, if and when they know how to “behave” i.e. respect the Roma codes for behaviour. They attract negative attention and acts from the majority, from other customers and doorkeepers; the consequence of being recognised as Roma is to be perceived as potential thieves and troublemakers. They know that this discrimination is against the constitution, even considering that the dress is their “national dress” – and that denying access on this basis is an “insult”; it would be as if the Sami people would be exposed to a similar ban.

The problems caused by clothing cannot be avoided in vocational education and work life. Clothes do have a major effect on Roma women’s opportunities throughout life. Thanks to residence-based rights, Roma go to school more permanently than before 1970s when being on the road as young women, the school might become a painful experience. In the last years of the secondary school, they come to an age when they have to choose whether to wear the traditional clothes or not. Our interviewees had made this choice at the age of 16-18 and stated that the choice is a female symbol of Roma values and identity, commitment to “respectability”. In case you later undo it, you will be excluded from the community. To the question if it was possible to leave those clothes for work or school hours, our interviewees unanimously replied: “We do not even want!”. Once they had tried a more ordinary long skirt: it was like going “naked”.

The interviewees had experienced exclusion and lack of opportunities at work too: the skirt cannot be used when working in (public) kitchen or in hospi-



tal, out in the woods with children. But this is all “so commonplace” that they do not even discuss it with other women. In any case they know that the authorities have been educated on how to treat Roma, there is even a guidebook for that.

The relationship towards the other major visible minority, the Somalis, was of interest. Among Roma women, they can say after seeing a TV programme “Did you see it? Horrible!” and refer to what Roma women would probably call genital mutilation if anything. They “pity” Somali women, especially women that show “only the eyes” and who cannot “go out after six o’ clock”. But it also came out that, from their perspective, Somalis made use of social benefits – the same accusations which have been used against Roma themselves. As to travelling Roma, their fate is “pitiful”. Women know about their economic difficulties and harassment on the streets, here and back there.

Thanks to the Roma mission association they came to know about shelters and felt that they can ask for advice there. However, while leaving they asked once again about the shelter with a secret address.

### Focus Group with Russians

The two participants were in their 40s-50s, one of them had arrived as a returnee; they were married to a Finn and a Russian. The discussion was carried out in Finnish; occasionally, mediation in Russian was necessary. In this focus group we gave a lot of information on the state of affairs in Finland. The theme outline did not work well in this group as they had come on a “mission”.

They started immediately to talk about a Russian acquaintance of theirs who is serving a 2.5 years sentence for physical violence against her Russian wife. Critique on institutional violence concerned both the authorities and NGOs, from reporting the crime to final sentence – fatal because it is connected with a permission to stay in the country. The xx association has done a lot to send him to prison and all in all, the constellation had been a “good woman” and a “bad man”; the “good woman” i.e. the “victim” must be saved.

*He has married to a Russian woman who was younger and brought that woman to Finland. They lived together one year, and he wanted to separate but the woman did not want to go back to Russia. And then she went to the xxx association to tell that she had been exposed to violence, she had a few bruises. She went to see a doctor to get a proof. But that woman had a lover, she moved to him. I don't know who had advised her. After a year then she remembered that she had been raped a year ago (gives a laugh). And that she had to report an offence. He says that nothing happened ... and he has to leave Finland but that women, she can stay here, she is the victim.*

Both emphasise that men are in the margins, “nobody asks them”. The interviewees do not know about work with men (and seem no interested in it). They continue to say that the language is a manifold problem. Often, a woman has

learnt the local language and the man has not. In general, women are good at speaking, presenting their case, and often they are guilty of verbal violence that “provokes” physical violence in men. This leads them to criticise not only the shelters but the police and the court too. Interpreters too might take the woman’s side.

*Interpretation ... has to do with such small psychological details. If a Finnish woman speaks Finnish well and is self-confident, and speaks with temperament, and if the man is such who speaks bad Finnish and cannot defend himself... Everybody believes her, takes her side, and the man for his part (laugh) is difficult to believe in. (...) Every-one believes that he is violent and (then) he is not allowed to see the children.*

Another theme of the discussion was the heated debate that is all over for the news now: in Russia, Finnish practices are often seen as institutional violence against Russian-born families; media too is to blame. The interviewees brought to the agenda break-up of the family, right to custody, visiting rights – and the practices of the authorities. Sometimes the children have been taken to custody, or the father has lost the visiting rights because he is violent, according to the wife; now the children are old enough to say that they do not want to see the father anymore. The interviewees seem a little unsure of the usefulness of joint custody. In any case, *«separation is the last step, instead the partners ought to try and try to make the partnership work»*. The concepts concerning violence in its different forms seemed not clear: verbal, physical violence and harassment.

One more theme was the interviewees’ work with youth, both in multi-cultural and Russian settings. Exposure to cultural harassment on the streets for being Russian and therefore potential prostitutes had not happened to them personally (if not once on a ship to Tallinn). Also, they did not avoid speaking Russian in public spaces. Media has to be blamed. Soon the interviewees turned to their work with girls and young women: heavy make-up relates to a weak self-confidence. Lastly, the question on the other immigrant groups exposed to discrimination was posed by the interviewees. They were not eager to discuss Somali women but took up their experiences in youth work with young Somali men, very likeable. They both stress a need to understand that integration is a two-sided process, where one has to leave aside prejudice.

As an answer to the open question they returned to the problems relating to men’s fate.

### **Focus Group with a Somali Woman**

In March 2012, finally, three Somali women were supposed to come to the interview, but only one came, a young woman in her early 30s, speaking good Finnish. She talked widely about VAW. On the other hand, the two researchers and the Roman mediator did not direct the discussion. It lasted nearly three hours. The

interviewee's language was colourful, full of slang words of young people; it was ironic that she was using terms that label and degrade Muslims, Somalis, and refugees; racism came up all the time. She herself seemed to be navigating between the majority and minority cultures, torn with dual loyalties. Much of this behaviour was mirrored by her clothes, the scarf, and sexual self-determination.

Since the interviewee had arrived as a child, she had a lot to say about violence in schools. Occasionally, she had to defend her younger brother from racist violence. Even teachers participated in bullying. Comments on Somalis not willing to work came also from teachers. «*Such talk, direct to my face, standing next to me*». She decided that «*this nigger will succeed*».

*I went to give a lecture in my old school that I have found my place here. It was nice to see the faces of young people... that I have succeeded, that I work in a laboratory. There were a few Somali girls there, who looked proud. That if she has been successful so can we too.*

Not all were like this. A few wonderful teachers saved her but in the end she had to leave high school before graduating. She is certain that in Somalia she would have become, maybe, a doctor.

Problems regarding media came up all the time. Every Somali is responsible for everybody else's doings. "It is not easy to be a Somali here", this is a "racist country". She became "paranoid", was "on guard all the time". And the success of the (populist) True Finn party made everything worse. The "pigment of the skin" and the religion do make a difference. "They [some majority people] call me a nigger, and I think I'm proud, what do you say about that." Calling by names is of course gendered. A "nigger whore" is luckily not heard so often anymore.

But there are big problems in the Somali community too, obsessed with religion. Pressures are stronger when growing up as everyone has to be a good Muslim. Wearing the scarf – or not – can be difficult for girls in their late teens. They are guarded by the community, and even little Somali boys can attack them for not wearing the scarf at school, call them "whores". Later, brothers – quite free themselves – can do guarding. This is why girls choose to go to bars where there are no black men. In a bitter tone, «*women should not go to bars, women must stay at home wearing the scarf*». Not all cope with this.

*Many run away from the family and started living alone, their own life, and court some Finnish man. It has happened that the parents have suggested a summer holiday in Somalia and then the girls have disappeared. (...) I disapprove those families. I absolutely not want to loyal to a community that treats an individual in such a cruel way. (...) That deserting. (...) Plus that you have learned to live here, you lose that right. (...) These are quite common (stories).*

All girls should have the right to make their own choices, including clothing. For her own part she has taken a halfway as she uses it in a knot, backwards, not as tied below the chin. But this does not feel right when being among Somalis. And she does not wear it among her Finnish friends as she would not be accepted. At the same time, she feels herself uneasy when seeing somebody in a “ni-quab”.

*It is a statement that you do not want anything from the world and that you save yourself to a life hereafter. Luckily it is not so common in Finland. I too have been startled when I have seen some of these women, and they had to say to me “salam aleikum”, that is, “peace on you”. Then I just reply to it. But I have noticed that I too disapprove. Why? Because I’m afraid that bad things is said about them.*

She feels that for them it would be impossible to get a job but live on social security. She did not herself wear the scarf when she went to the job interviews. At work she has noticed that some do not like “dark pigment” and/or Muslim religion but can be friendly. She had some innocent flirt with one true Finn guy. She is an active trade-unionist, even in a trusted position, but there she has to confront discrimination. On the other hand, one trade union top leader has welcomed her.

When comparing life here and back there, women have more freedoms in Finland than in Somalia as in Finland gender relationships are not as much male-dominated. The welfare system protects you from economic violence.

*There is a saying: in Somalia you are under the foot of a man but in Europe Allah is merciful, here you can get social benefits, you do not need the man. Men are like astonished, that power has been removed from them. Because there (in Somalia) they earn the living and you have to be the obedient wife as men can take another wife whenever they want.*

The issue of rape in warfare was raised by the interviewers. Yes, “something horrible” had happened in Mogadishu but mothers hit the daughters for asking about such “dirty things. “It was terribly shameful.” To the question what is the most horrible experience, the interviewee replied without hesitation but she chose the term that is used in her community.

*Yes, that circumcision, there it is. Because it is about the human being’s integrity and it harms you also in the longer run. There is talk about it but not enough in my opinion. I feel that even today people in our culture, the Somali culture do not understand that the individual is free... that the community does not own you. But luckily it is not done here in Finland but I cannot trust on it. I’m pretty certain that there those girls are taken ... (Most difficult to recognise?) But the most difficult to recognise it is maybe domestic violence because in our midst we do not talk about it.*

She tells also about a group-internal practice at divorce and other disputes. Her mother is one of mediators (consolidators) in their clan. She talks to the wife to find out what happened. But not many women want to talk about the fact that their husbands beat here. We have such sayings as “if a man hits you there must be a reason for it.”

*For us the shame is most important of all. I think that admit that it is difficult now and I go the shelter. There is much talk about it if somebody has gone to the shelter (little laugh). It is a quite shameful thing. It is talked here and there, pondered upon, what are the motives.*

Polygamy hurts women, they can become badly depressed. The Khoran is on men’s side, the prophet Mohamed is used to suppress them.

*Actually Somali women can be so depressed that that it is thought that there is a devil inside them. (...) The woman goes to a dark corner to sit alone, maybe talk to her-self. And some-one comes there and says that there is a devil inside her and one should read the Khoran (Quaran) to her. Then it can be some religious sisters who visit you, who have long black robs, they remind you of that a man has the right to take many wives... that Mohamed’s wife agreed to this. This is a most violent custom in my view because it is an insult.*

As to the question on sexual practices, “the angels damn you” for denying sex and not to have more children. Again, there should be women interpreting the Khoran in another way. Women are now modern, work and do not want so many children, and it should be the women’s own decision as they are the ones who give birth. Finland is an ok country, here you can realise yourself in spite of being a woman. On the other hand, even here women have to stay virgins till marriage, and some have anal sex even if there is a HIV-risk, so it is unsafe in her opinion. Prostitution in Somalia is widespread and according to women it is due poverty.

As to the open question, in the interviewee’s mind all was said already.

### **Focus Group with Mixed Participants**

The Asian participant from a trade union (after seeing the survey form) did not appear. The three women who did, represented migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa, the Roma and the authorities i.e. the police; their age was between 30s-40s and 50s; two were divorced with children, one married and expecting. The African interviewee arrived with the husband but had lived alone for the past 15 years; she had worked for long at a public centre and was responsible for activities with migrant women; the minority woman was an artist with academic examination. The policewoman had ten years’ experience at a unit specialised in

violence in close relationships. The interviewers were both researchers and the mediator.

The discussion started from the basics: how to define gender violence? The migrant brought up her own experiences from the African home country and other Western countries – and also from work here, including responsibility for work with women and collaboration with the police. The Roma woman spoke from inside her cultural community but not personally; the police woman pondered upon policing and migration and her own position as a woman in the male working community.

A migrant woman who stayed in shelter pointed to the fact that a woman can be the violator as well, because she met men who were victims of violence at home. According to the police woman, one cannot close the eyes from this kind of violence. But the threshold for calling the police by a neighbour is high when it is about a man's exposal. And very few men come to the police station themselves. The migrant continues by claiming that NGOs leave men aside, break up the family. This does not work in African cultures. According to her experience, Asian women too understand violence in their own way. All in all, the man needs to feel like he is one who "brings the bread to the table", and Eastern European models should not be applied everywhere. Another problem is the sexualisation of African men, treating them as nothing else as physical and sexual beings. "That brings the man down".

She takes up, from another angle, institutional violence or incapacity of the police to deal with Nigerian prostitutes. In encounters between white police men and black prostitutes, the colour of the skin and even colonial history are relevant. The police woman agrees but emphasises that at the moment there are very few of those who have been trained and are not Finnish by birth. *«As to the criteria, you have to be a Finnish citizen but not a born Finn... (but) mastering Finnish language is stressed».*

The Roman participant has concerns about culturally specific rules that permit both beating women and children and violence between men themselves – is that gender violence too? The worst is physical violence against women and children, and women's fate. If there is a conflict between a man and a woman, the woman is "badly off". Even if the man has beaten the woman without any reason, a woman cannot attack the man, in her culture. To a question on contacting the police or a social worker, or going to a shelter, she says that that it depends.

*(It is possible only if) the life of the woman is according to a witness and clearly in danger... or if she is in hospital in intensive care... or her hair has been cut or something. Then normally her parents defend their child (...) let her to go to a shelter. But if it is about a milder violence then that you contact the police then this is bad publicity to the woman.*

The dangers regarding the separation and divorce were shared by all. The migrant tells about visits of the police (called by neighbours) and escapes to a shelter which became “like a home“. In one occasion, the husband contacted her boss to put an end to her economic independence – told how he loves the wife and only wants to keep the family together but the female boss refused to fire her. The husband’s brother was involved too, to help him sending her back to Nigeria where she would be totally isolated. In the end, she dropped charges herself as without a stay permit of her own she would have been in serious difficulties. The situation was life-threatening, dangerous also to her parents back there.

The police woman tells about the police’s role in legal procedure. It is common that at some point women wish that the charge would not be taken further to avoid making the situation worse. The recent law reform makes recalling public prosecution impossible. The Roma participant confirms that intensification of violence after the divorce can occur, when the husband cannot control “one-hundred per cent” his former family’s life.

The most challenging issue for the police is violence against children. In many cultures (and even in the Finnish culture) physical violence has been ok – to give fillip, bull hair, or beaten. This often comes up in discussions with clients: they do not understand that Finnish laws are valid here. All agree that more information is needed as the parents do not know about the local custom, especially illiterate refugees are not told. Anyway, police practices are questioned because protection of children can too easily turn into custody.

As to the restraining order, the police woman sees that it might be a “piece of paper”. Only those at high risk can get a security plan made and, moreover, the police lacks resources for 24/7 surveillance. The woman with family pays in any case a high price as going to a shelter “muddles up badly the everyday life of the family as the kindergartens and schools and work places are in some other place”.

As to institutional violence, the police woman claims that the Finnish police is not racist even though she herself was taught not to be such an idealist. Instead of being like a “guy” she has been a kind of “social police”, i.e. collaborated with social workers a lot. The African migrant-professionals has used the “power game” to train police men and learned about gender-based discrimination against women police.

There are ways to solve these problems, possibly thanks to women’s networks. In the Roma community men must be involved, together with the older women, but there are not so many “conscious and educated men”. However, they do not say a word for women, that “this is wrong in fear of losing their face in front of other men”. The one who is homosexual does not count. Something has anyway changed: women are ready to contact the police. The migrant’s solution has been going to politics, networking with women, not only with those Finnish women married with an African but Nigerian women too. These NGOs however do not get funding as everything goes to one association. She wants to

stress the differences between women, the importance of education and class. Moreover, instead of leaning on the social office, women should be encouraged to economic independence, to start a business.

In the end, the interviewees returned to defining violence. It is “abuse of power” and includes economic violence and social isolation. For the Roma participant, men from Africa are “threatening” because of their size. Rape (a threat) is mentioned but the African interviewee hopes that it will be investigated more thoroughly.

As to the open question, the Roma participant said (in a silent voice) that incest is the most silenced issue. The police woman for her part repeats the importance of more and correct information to migrants, the need for multi-professional and multi-cultural collaboration and, lastly, lack of resources.

### 5.3. Final Remarks

#### Introduction

Working against violence towards migrant and minority women – not to forget sexual and gender minorities – has been badly delayed in Finland, mainly because immigration started only in the early 1990s. The information on the subject and its forms are patchy and sometimes non-existing. Often, statistics and various surveys made with “majority purposes” say hardly anything about minorities, and especially regarding gender; the information sometimes is not comparable. The legislation (the constitution, special legislation, criminal code) – for prevention, protection and punishing – is in general in place and follows the international norms and policies. But there are serious problems as far as the implementation is concerned, of both the policy and on the institutional level. There are only a few sporadic interventions (e.g. honour violence), but on the whole the “*SPEAK OUT!*issues” have not been properly integrated to even newest anti-VAW plans, nationally or locally. A lot has thus been left to the local institutions, in particular, the units for fighting against gender violence, the insufficiently resourced NGOs among them. It needs to be mentioned that in Greater Helsinki the share of migrant women in local shelters exceeds their share in the population three-to-four times, but fighting VAW itself in regard to minorities has not been on the agenda (properly anyway). Lastly, since the Speak Out project started in 2011, violence against the most vulnerable national minority and women has not been taken into account at all. Actually, the Speak Out team is the *first* to map out the experiences of Roma women (living here since the 16<sup>th</sup> century). The analysis of the situation of Sami women still awaits.

Therefore it would be necessary to turn to the Statistics Finland and push them to include these problems to the next survey on the living conditions of the residents in Finland – and to encourage some research and development units to continue along more specific lines (irrespective of the difficulties re-



garding the “banning” of ethnic statistics). The migration departments in Greater Helsinki are also in need of networking to start some joint integrated efforts in this respect. Convening the various shelters in the area to work more intensively together around the minority issue is a “must”.

## Survey

The survey, by targeting the public and services sector, controls and helps institutions, and it also seems to be the first in its kind to be carried in Finland-Greater Helsinki-Helsinki. Though some of the problematical aspects of the survey could have been avoided by a more extensive testing of the questionnaire, the questions that created confusion and comments also showed the need to continue discussions on different ways of understanding violence and especially, violence against women. They also indicated which kind of moral issues were considered as the most controversial and difficult when thinking about cultural sensitivity and women’s equality and freedom.

Though women, who answered to the questionnaire were probably more motivated in facing these issues than the average people, the questionnaire revealed that many professionals working with migrants, health care and social issues are interested in violence against women among migrant and minority women and that this topic is seen as acute and deserving more attention. This was especially showed by the interest in receiving more training on these issues.

Therefore, the uneven distribution of training should be taken into account. According to the statistics, 33%-43% of the clients in shelter houses taking care of victims of family violence have a migrant background in Helsinki, which is over three times more than their portion of the population. Yet very few professionals, who work in these services, have received training on the migrant issues. Respectively, even though migrants seem to be more at risk of gendered violence, the authorities working with them have rarely received any training on violence against women. Though the main reason for the lack of training is that public bodies seldom provide it for their employees, in some cases the attitudes of the professionals may be reluctant as well, partially due to the lack of resources and the work load they already have. The issue also came out in the focus group discussion with professionals, as a representative of an NGO, which provides such training, told that some professionals, working with refugees did not consider detecting and helping the victims of gendered violence as a part of their tasks.

## Focus Groups

The focus group discussions produced a lot of challenging material to be analysed by the closing research conference in February 2013. The women involved represented the biggest and the same groups which in all accounts came

up: Russian-speaking, Somali and Roma. These three groups are themselves very different from each other in terms of being “Finnish/non-Finnish”, culturally “close/distant”, or relatively “well/weakly integrated” to the Finnish life. The last two belong to the “visible minorities”. Especially in these two cases, the method was tricky: it is not customary to speak about sensitive issues in (formal) groups neither among Roma nor Somali women (although the sessions at the Monika Association proved otherwise, partially at least). As to the culturally “visible” groups, the importance of religion-related cultural norms, customs and practices (Roma “law”, “sharia law”) – and religion itself (both the Bible and the Khoran) proved a “source” of problematic constructions along the gender lines. Divisions and hierarchies in work, daily life, within multigenerational families and the communities as a whole, bind women to male control, expose them to various kinds of physical, sexual, mental and symbolic violence not to forget economic violence and social isolation. A few remarks.

There is no common vocabulary as to what constitutes violence and how it relates to “equality”. In this respect “provoking” is a term that builds on gender “qualities” and makes women guilty of violence. Reliance on oral knowledge simultaneously with submission to group-internal “laws” and the dictates of religion creates a vicious situation, in which women (and young, teenager girls) do not have much space for interpreting experiences and norms from their own angle. Disobedience, violating the norms regarding, e.g. sexuality, reproduction and family formation (virginity, arranged/forced marriages, polygamy), come with a price. The clothing as a female symbol of the cultural community is particularly problematic, almost a trap: by keeping to the traditions women are respected in the community’s eyes but are targeted negatively by the majority; by choosing otherwise, they get opportunities for independent life in greater society but may be excluded from their own community. As a note, the physical symbols of cultural belonging can be interpreted as physical violence. The same applies to the issue of genital mutilation, modification or circumcision.

Sexualisation, calling someone a “whore” is of interest too. From inside the community it seems to individualise the woman as “bad”, a deviant; from the side of the majority (or other minorities) it seems to label the whole group of women as people who are different and must rightly so be degraded, disposed, even destroyed. Racism does not include references to the skin colour, the “pigment” only but may refer to national origin and way of life of whole communities. As to vocabularies, using labels as self-identification terms can be one way of empowerment and critique of the majority/men but it is not necessarily useful in the long run. This kind of criticism prevents seeing alternative ways and means for genuine self-determination, seeing oneself both as the same and different.

Gender and generations are in many ways intertwined, especially in regard to cultures and communities where the autonomy is based on seniority. This does,

to some extent, empower older women but in case there are cultural hindrances to cross-generational communication and collaboration as to the most sensitive issues, it often turns against younger women: women with some power and authority become allies of men. In the most crucial phases of the sexual and reproductive life, younger women would, on the contrary, need to trust these women themselves in order to question gendered suppressive and degrading practices.

As far as the discussions between professionals is concerned, another kind of approach on the life cycle highlights a couple of groups which are in the most vulnerable positions, namely asylum seekers and, also EU-European “tourists”, travelling Roma. These situations deserve special attention and conscious use of empowering methods to tackle the multiple and intertwined disadvantages.

The role of men and men’s exposure to gender violence (by women) is a case by itself. Irrespective of men’s work carried out for more than ten years, there are often accusations of men being “provoked” for severe violence, as a response of women’s “milder” type of violence i.e. verbal violence. Criticism on the system (formal institutions, NGOs) was the most direct approach in this respect. As global cultural hegemonies too came into the picture – Finnish or Western *vs* Eastern, African or Asian ways of arranging gender relationships in general and the family life in particular – this problem is worth mention, also because of growing post-colonial criticism.

Note: “personal questions” made us hear the issue that was not on the theme list, incest – a challenge itself.

Therefore, special attention should be paid to women who are vulnerable in different ways. The “old minority” Roma women must in the end come to attention. They fall through the net: as born Finnish citizens, they do not approach the services for migrant units; in the units for majority women, their cultural ties are not understood and/or respected. Not to forget that the only shelter with a secret address (in Greater Helsinki at least) is dedicated to migrant women. Turning to cultural silences, in communities leaning on oral traditions, new and more open forums should be taken along, like Internet for instance, which is important to younger women tied by the seniority rules, without a voice of their own inside the communities. Diasporal situations and moments call, in such a “model country” like Finland, urgent and additional efforts. Second generations represent a concern also in view of transnational motherhood, a risk both for the mother and the child/children. Lastly, a word or warning needs to be mentioned: even if culturally valid, all kinds of methods that do not question women’s dependence *versus* men’s superiority – or practices which are usually understood as violation of women’s sexuality and integrity – must be explored carefully.

## SOCIAL INDICATORS

### Migrants and People with Migrant Origin and on VAW in the Project's Territory

#### Migrant and Minority People in Finland, Greater Helsinki and Helsinki

On January 31<sup>st</sup> 2011, there were 5 401 267 residents in Finland; out of them 183 133 were foreign citizens (4.0%); 244 827 were speaking other languages other than the national ones (Finnish, Swedish, Sami) (4.5%); 266 148 were outside of Finland (4.9%). Women made up 50.9% of the total population but among newcomers they were less than a half: 47.1% out of foreign citizens; 49.5% speaking non-national languages; 49.4% was born outside of Finland.

In Helsinki the total number of those who spoke non-national languages was relatively double compared to Finland as a whole i.e. 63 475 (10.8%). These residents form the “new minority”. They had arrived from Europe: 37 142 (58.2%); Asia 14 737 (23.1%); and Africa: 9 279 (15.2%). Smaller groups were from North-America: 1 726; Central and South-America: 1 518; Australia and Oceania: 368 (unknown: 977).

Special information from the City Statistical Office of Helsinki (Helsingin kaupungin tietokeskus) tells that women born outside Finland make up 9.5% of all women in Greater Helsinki; the biggest groups are women from the Soviet Union / Russia, Estonia, Somalia, China, Thailand, Former Yugoslavia and India. From a gender standpoint, more men (36%) from the Soviet Union/Russia than women (31%) have settled down in Greater Helsinki. Regarding arrivals from Africa, 70% of women and 66% of men live here (Joronen 2007)<sup>1</sup>.

As to the admission gates, the differences are evident as well. Among migrants from the neighbouring Soviet Union/Russia, women are a majority (over 60%) as so many arrived as marriage migrants. The same applies to Thai people; the major bulk (some 80%) is women, almost all marriage migrants. The partners were by majority Finnish. As to refugees, Somali women are a minority as they often come in reconjunction with the family (Helsinki – tilastoja 2011). Interestingly, in Helsinki the number of single-provider families is above average (50%) among Vietnamese, Estonian, Russian and Somali families (Joronen 2007)<sup>1</sup>.

The most numerous *national i.e. “old minorities”* (excluding 250,000 well-positioned Swedish-speaking people) are the Sami and Roma people. Some 10,000 Sami and 10,000–13,000 Roma people live here, around 3 000 Sami and 3,000 Roma in Greater Helsinki. (Saamelaiset; Suomen romanit) The exact number cannot be given as compiling statistics on ethnic basis is not allowed. Statistics

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<sup>1</sup> Work migration has been low; men are the majority among work migrants. From the Soviet Union/Russia, women make up the majority also among returnees. Note: illegal migrants are less than 2% (Saarinen and Hietala 2010).

Table 13: Statistics on migrants: Finland, Greater Helsinki (Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa), Helsinki, 12.31.2011

<b>Finland</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Total population</b>	5,401,267	2,748,733	50.9
Foreign citizens	183,133	86,178	47.1
Born outside Finland	266,148	131,356	49.4
<b>Greater Helsinki – Total</b>	1,050,824	54,729	52.0
Born outside Finland, total	94,966	43,937	46.3
Helsinki (Total)	588,549	(est) 311,930	(est) 53.0
<b>Non-national languages (Tot)</b>	63,475		10.8
Russian	13,684		21.6 (out of 63,475)
Estonian	7,940		12.5
Somali	6,513		10.3
English	4,291		6.8
Arabic	2,905		4.6
Chinese	2,328		3.7
Kurdish	1,900		3.0
Spanish	1,745		2.7
German	1,474		2.3
French	1,315		2.3
Turkish	1,294		2.0
Vietnam	1,195		1.9
Other	16,891		26.6

Sources: Statistics Finland; Statistical Yearbook of Helsinki; Helsinki – tilastoja 2011.

on language is inaccurate as these minority languages are almost extinct and are only coming back now.

An estimate on the numbers of the *sexual and gender minorities* have been presented since 1990, ranging from 5-15% of population, over 100 000 people (Lehtonen 2006).

### **Violence against (Migrant and Minority) Women**

The second *Action Plan to Reduce Violence against Women* given by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (Naisiin kohdistuvan väkivallan 2010) aims to implement the Government Action Plan for Gender Equality for 2008-2011, in which the government decided to draw up a multi-sectorial action plan to reduce vio-

Table 14: Statistics on migrant women in Greater Helsinki (Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa) and Helsinki, in 2011 (12.31.2011) (selected)

<b>Born outside Finland</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Greater Helsinki</b>			<b>Helsinki</b>	
Women born outside Finland	53,483	9.5	31,795	(est) 10.0
Soviet Union, Russia	13,589	(53,483) 25.4	8,361	(31,795) 26.3
Estonia	8,131	15.2	4,881	15.4
Somalia	2,809	5.2	1,835	5.5
China	2,240	4.2	1,245	3.9
Thailand	1,620	3.0	893	2.8
Vietnam	1,267	2.4	578	1.8
Former Yugoslavia	1,194	2.2	457	1.4
Iraq	1,158	2.2	604	1.9
India	1,116	2.1	554	1.7
Other	20,360	38.1	12,387	39.0

Source: Helsingin kaupugin tietokeskus, special information.

lence against women – in order to implement global and regional norms, to respond the critique from the UN-CEDAW and update the first national action plan against violence and prostitution drafted in 1998-2002. The new plan emphasizes three “P-principles”: prevention, protection of victims, and bringing the perpetrators to justice. It summarises the trends at the end-2000s by claiming that violence has increased, mainly due to an increase in sexual violence and, moreover, that harassment as part of it targets especially young women. Furthermore, the number of women who have been exposed to various kinds of violence in close relationships is higher. The analysis leans on the surveys of the National Research Institute of Legal Policy from 1997 and 2005 (Piispa *et al.* 2006). They targeted women with an age between 18-64 to map out their experiences starting from the age of 15. In 2005, a great part of these women had been exposed to violence: 43.5% to at least to one form of violence or threat; 29.1% to violence outside the partnership; 19.6% to violence in current partnership; 49.0% to violence in all partnerships including the previous ones. Alarmingly, as compared to 1997, the share of those who did not seek help had increased (to over 50%) – meaning that the share of those who reported and/or consulted had decreased (both to around 20%).

Even this newer plan does not say much about new minorities – only (in words) that attention should be focused on “family violence”, “honour violence”, “polygamy” and “genital mutilation”. Worth a special note is that (based on Lehti 2009) homicides have doubled if compared to similar deaths of native women; Iraqi (Kurd) and Russian women are mentioned (among men it is at the “native” level); two-thirds of the killers belong to the same group as the victim. As to sexual crimes in particular, non- and under-reporting is a problem although some improvement has been happening. There is also a mention on refugee women as being often exposed to sexual violence before arrival. As to “honour violence” the plan refers to actions by NGOs and the state (Turvallinen elämä jokaiselle (Safe life for all) 2008) in late 2000s that however did not give any figures on victims by gender. Problems in contacting the local control system and information, help and service system are due to women’s weak position in the family, lack of knowledge of local language and information on rights and services. On the institutional side, migrants meet misunderstanding, underestimation of problems and prejudices. The report mentions also difficulties concerning stay permits, regarding both refugees and marriage migrants.

From early 2000s, in other sources, there are some figures on migrants. The National Victim Survey (2003) pointed out that new minority groups report on more violence than the natives (partly because the figures include racism). As to women, group-internal violence is included in addition to physical and psychic violence, isolation and economic dependence. Men are mostly exposed to group-external violence (e.g. on streets). In the same year, the Statistics Finland published a report (Pohjanpää *et al.* 2003) on migrants’ living conditions. According to this survey 44% of Somali, 18% of Estonian, 14% of Vietnamese and 13% of Russian had been exposed to violence during the last year (2001-2002). In the 60% of the cases, the ones doing physical violence were close relatives. 65% – 75%, depending on the group, did not report the crime to the police.

Therefore, the majority of the violations are not investigated and prosecuted. In 2007, the police (Korhonen and Ellonen 2007) was informed only about 1 2004 crimes against migrant women: 6% of them concerned sexual violence, 22% threats, 72% other physical violence; 60% of physical violence took place in close relationships. Victims were often Russians, Estonians and Somalis; out of the violators, 55% were Finnish.

Not much information is available on Sami and Roma women. In 2009, the National Victim Survey (2009) included a mention on violence against ethnic and cultural minorities but only to conclude that there is no information on national cultural minorities<sup>2</sup>. There is however one important source, namely the Annual Report of the Minority Ombudsman from 2002 on, dealing with both old and new minorities<sup>2</sup>. Year after year, the violated groups are Roma, Russian-

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<sup>2</sup> In autumn 2012, the Ministry of social Affairs and Health, finally, started investigating violence against Roman women.

speaking, and Somali people. The same groups came up in the FRA's EU-MIDIS Report (2009) (Roma were not investigated in Finland). Note: none of these reports is carried out according to gender.

Sexual and gender minorities are mentioned in the second action plan. As far as males are concerned, every 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> has been exposed to violence, mostly in public places, while women were less and mostly at home; the violators have been mostly men (Lehtonen 1999).

## Services

The first national action plan of the 1990s-2000s hardly touched the topic of migrant women – although immigration continued increasing and integration policy plans included some mentions on violence against women (Saarinen 2010). Also, as late as in end-2000s, the handbook for social and health workers by the City of Helsinki (Ensiapua 2008) mentions (new) minorities only in one subordinate clause; Roma are totally invisible. The book includes however the list of public institutions and NGOs for information, help and support, which are available to all residents. And the recent guide from the Ministry for Social Affairs and Health (Tunnista 2009) mentions “honour violence” but says nothing more.

Therefore, the handbook for social and health workers produced jointly with the Ministry for Social Issues and Health, the Ministry of Labour, and the Monika Association (Kyllönen-Saarnio and Nurmi 2005), continuing the work of the first anti-VAW plan in view of migrants, is a valuable source<sup>3</sup>. The handbook was based on interviews with professionals as well as Monika's own experiences. Special concern was that violence is not recognised by basic help institutions and authorities. At the same time, there are (too) few shelters; in Finland, where the distances are long, especially in the eastern and northern parts, this is a severe problem. It is difficult to speak out and search for help, let alone make official complaints; consequently, it becomes difficult to intervene and protect victims by prevention, early intervention, or low threshold services. The handbook emphasises that violence harms integration and welfare of children, and may intensify problems related to separation and custody of children.

In a key position are the special help institutions. According to the latest annual report of the Monika Association (Monika-naiset liitto 2011), in 2011, its resource centre was contacted by 684 clients; the total number of contacts to clients and (outsider) professionals rose to 4 491. The clients resided mostly in Greater Helsinki (95%). Statistics on ethnic background is available: over half of the violators (55.3%) were Finnish. As to the clients, the major groups were from Russia and Eastern Europe (47%), other parts of Europe (11%), Asia

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<sup>3</sup> See also numerous other publications by the Monika Association and the report by Jekaterina Tantt.



17%, Africa 11%; only a few were from the Americas (3%) (11% was unknown). In the last years, violence has become harsher, and there are many formerly hidden forms that have become visible: honour violence, forced marriages, trafficking<sup>4</sup>.

MONIKA's activities include information, hot line in nearly 20 languages, empowerment by peer groups, consultation, and, a shelter with a secret address (see Jekaterina Tantt). In "ordinary" shelters in 2011 in Greater Helsinki, migrant women are extremely over-represented as clients (from 33% to 43%) compared to population figures (some 10%) (Pääkaupungin turvakoti 2011; Naisten apu Espoossa 2011; Vantaan kaupungin turvakoti 2011 (public)<sup>5</sup>. In the last years, among clients in Espoo, there have been some trafficked women – and very few men; 3 in 2011. But the shelter collaborates closely with NGO men's groups, e.g. Miessakit (Men's groups) Association for helping with problems related to intimate partner violence, fatherhood, and divorce; support for immigrant men has been carried out since mid-2000s (Vieraasta veljeksi – From Strangers to Brothers).

Sexual and gender minorities contact mainly the Sexpo (sexual policies) Association (1969), or the Seta (sexual equality) Association (1974) for information, advice and support.

## Legislative Reforms

Legislative reforms to implement the three "P-principles" started in 1990s, along with the implementation of the UN norms and policies against VAW. The criminal code now includes criminalisation of battery and rape in marriage/partnership (1994); since 2011, public prosecution has been in force even without the victim's consent. The paragraphs on raping and pimping were renewed in 1998, on trafficking in 2004; on crimes against humanity and ethnic agitation in 2008; on ethnic discrimination in 2009. The separate restraining order was renewed in 1998. Homosexuality was decriminalized late, in 1971. The Non-discrimination act (2004) is also in force and denies discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation; it was preceded by the reform of the criminal code in 1995 already. Registration of same-sex partnership (not marriage) was enacted in 2001 (not congregated by the church). Note: the reform of the constitution in 1994 already included protection of the rights of various minorities. The Equality act (1986) was the first one in this direction (Finlex).

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<sup>4</sup> Figures on forms of violence: mental and verbal violence 355; physical violence 282; threats 18; economic violence 179; stay permit 12; child custody 93; child protection 84; residential separation 83; threat to kill 7; sexual violence 57; violence against children 32; child kidnap 19; trafficking 17; threat to forced marriage 14; other 397.

<sup>5</sup> The Espoo shelter with most migrants will be closed on December 31<sup>st</sup> 2012 (!), to be replaced with "safe flats".

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### 6.1. The Survey on Representations of VAW, Gender and Migration among Professionals

Upon receiving the questionnaire, TIYE International had to find a way to translate it into Dutch. At the same time we had to look for a researcher and other personnel, as well as different articles that were published in the Netherlands. We also had to discern what kind of research was done and when. The preparation went well. In sum, the main difficulties that were encountered were with the questionnaire and the budget.

#### Objectives and Methodology

The questionnaire, which was originally developed by the University of Padua is extensive in its attempt to gain in depth knowledge of the situations surrounding violence against women. However, in order to make the survey culturally relevant to women in the Netherlands several changes were made. The purpose of this questionnaire was to gain as much insight and information as possible into the current and predominant issues that some (Black, Migrant, and Refugee) BMR women face on a daily basis. These issues include, but are not limited to, family, economy, crime, work, society, support and specific risks relevant to BMR women such as female genital mutilation (FGM). In conjunction with interviews conducted in focus groups and individual interviews with police officials, social workers and scholarly research, the questionnaire acts as further concrete and quantitative knowledge of the ongoing and complex issues surrounding gender-based violence experienced by many Dutch and BMR women. The survey was completed by persons from all walks of life, backgrounds and professions relevant to this research and as such adds to the richness of the conclusions and results inferred therein.

#### Designing the Questionnaire

Questions were aimed specifically at black, migrant and refugee (BMR) women in conjunction with intimidation, honour crimes and other socially and culturally relevant questions. For instance, “Considering all the users of your service, could you indicate how many women from the different BMR groups do access

it?” and “Please indicate the main countries of origin of BMR women who access your service. Maximum three countries in order of importance” were amongst the questions that were asked. Aside from specific cultural aspects which were covered, the survey covered a series of issues ranging from typologies of victims and perpetrators to public knowledge and media coverage. It also dealt with the age, work experience, training and opinions of professionals in numerous fields which were applicable to the research conducted on BMR women. The adaptation of the survey although complete, was difficult due to the original approach to the survey and its relevance to Italian society as opposed to Dutch society. Language was also somewhat of an issue in that many of the respondents, of mixed origin and different professional approaches did not find relevance in parts of the questionnaire. For the purpose of this research the questionnaire was translated into Dutch with the availability of English translation as well. However, all the surveys returned were in the Dutch language. The survey, as previously mentioned, is highly dense which presented numerous difficulties. For instance, there was not enough budget to adequately translate the survey and due to the denseness and details we had to do many face to face surveys in order to ensure quality control which was both time consuming and costly.

### **Description of the Dutch Sample**

Of the sample group, approximately 42% are volunteers working with BMR women, whilst the second highest percentile, governmental and non-profit organizations each account for 25% of professionals. 16% worked for the government, 9% worked for private organizations and 8% worked in the public service sector.

The majority of the respondents, 12.5%, were born in the 1940's, another 12.5% were born in the 1950's, 35% were born in the 1960's whilst another 27% were born in the 1970's. Lastly, 10% were born in the 1980's (see Figure 10). In this sense, we feel very confident that although the surveys were problematic in terms of completion, the information gathered remains relevant and strong.

With regards to the respondents, as previously mentioned, their backgrounds vary widely. They include members from Indonesia, Aruba, St. Maarten, Ethiopia, Turkey, Ghana, Brazil, Morocco, Suriname and the Netherlands (see Figure 11).

Approximately 44% of the respondents had experience in the field on gender-based violence against BMR women for at least 2-5 years whilst another 32% have experience ranging from 6-15 years and very few have experience over 25 years, about 12% and another 12% have less than 2 years of experience.

With regards to the level of education of the respondents, 25% completed their high school education 35% completed their HBO whilst 24% completed their MBO. 9% of the respondents completed university level education and an-

Figure 10: Type of organization

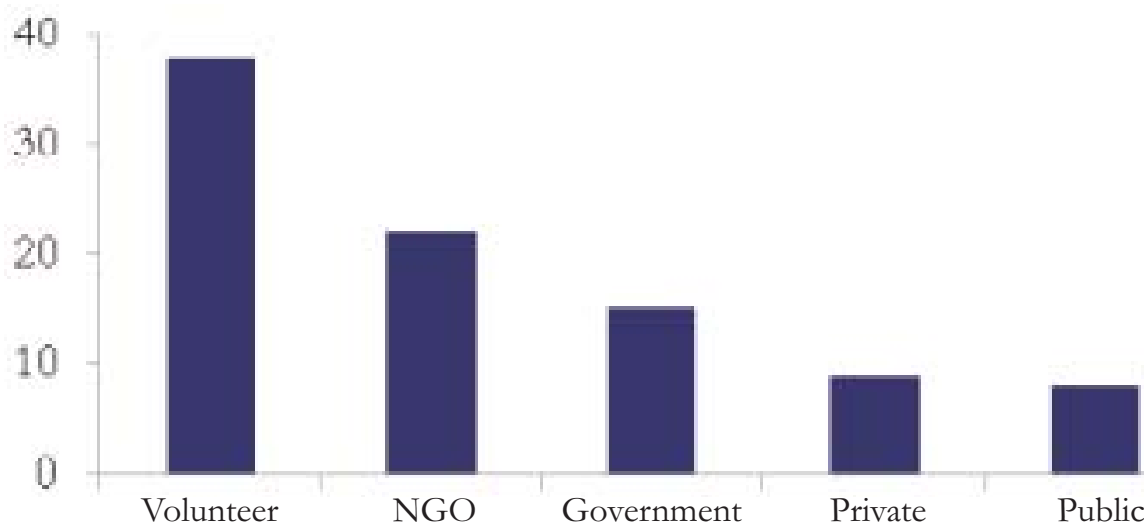
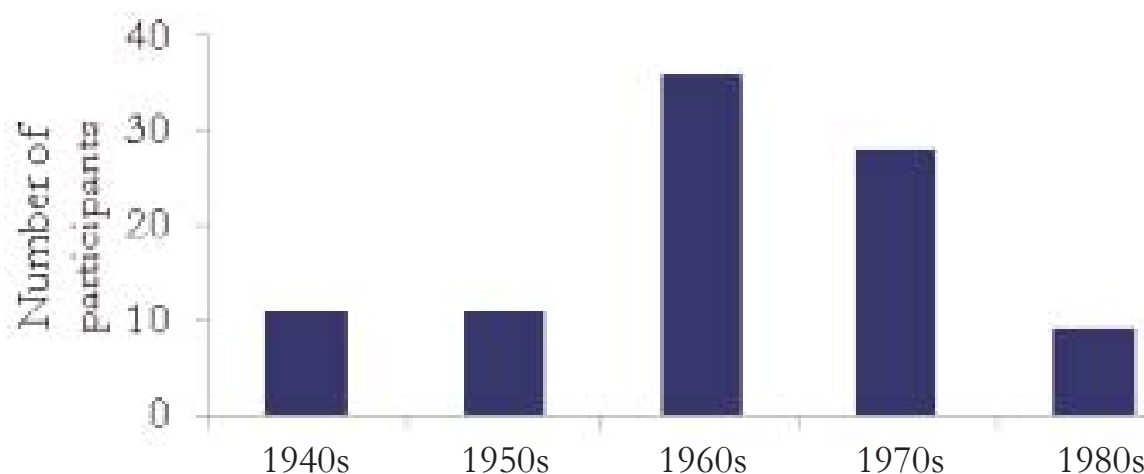


Figure 11: Year of birth



other 9% completed their postgraduate studies. Some respondents failed to fill in the portion of the survey creating 7% of non-applicability (see Figure 12).

## 6.2. The Dutch Questionnaires

The questionnaires were distributed via email and in-person. Together with the questionnaire, there was often an introduction letter distributed alongside the survey so that participants could fully grasp and thus appreciate the importance and relevance of their contributions. Distributions were made to individuals on a person-to-person basis but also during conferences and meetings, taking advantage of any opportunities available to reach the persons relevant to our re-

Figure 12: Country of origin

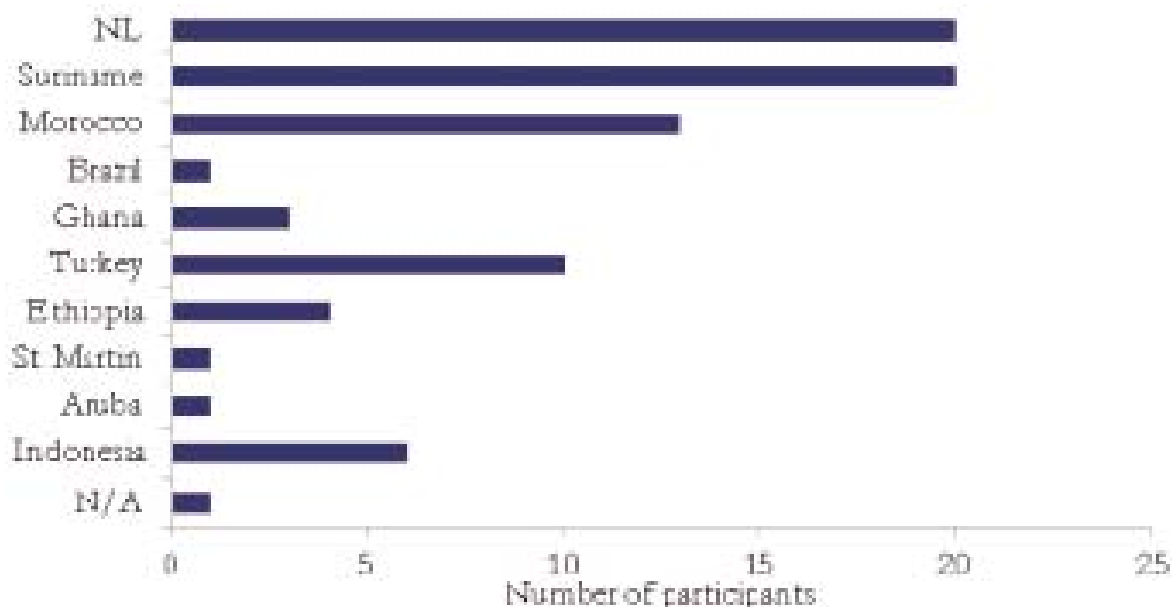
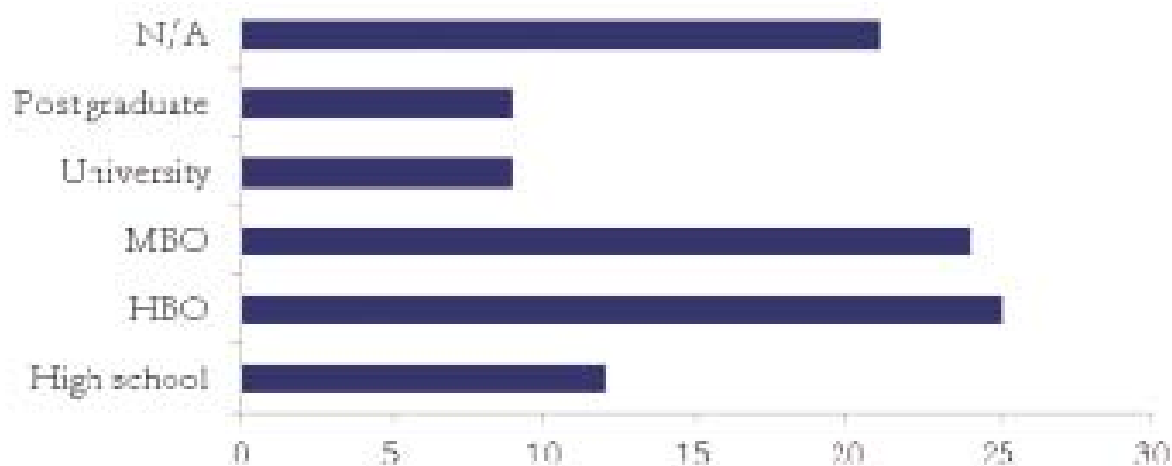


Figure 13: Level of education



search. Relevance was determined in part, based on the qualifications and involvement of participants in matters pertaining to violence against women, with particular emphasis upon violence against black, migrant and refugee women. Since the surveys were difficult for the majority of respondents, our best efforts were made to promote the completion of the questionnaire, although this was impossible in certain cases. The surveys were sent to hundreds of people, including members of organizations, law officials, shelters, volunteers, social workers and other relevant participants. However, limitations arose in the fact that of the surveys returned about 25% of the respondents were unable to complete the survey while approximately 10% of the surveys returned were abandoned entirely. It should be noted that many of the participants criticized the surveys design, claiming that it promoted a “tunnel vision” perspective on gender based



violence as it relates to some BMR women and a notable amount; about 20% were accompanied with extensive notes on the difficulties and limitations posed by the survey. The criteria of participants were based on the following:

- Members of the government with a background in BMR issues and policies.
- Social workers who have direct contact with victims of gender based violence.
- Volunteers who are directly involved with entities and victims of gender based violence against BMR women.
- Doctors, psychiatrists and other medical professionals who encounter and treat BMR women on a regular basis.
- Survivors of and advocates against gender based violence against BMR.
- Non-Governmental Organizations, human rights organization, research institutes and experts involved with the subject of gender-based violence.
- Police officers and law officials who encounter and deal with gender violence in the Netherlands.
- Intercultural professionals, help desk professionals, welfare professionals, youth workers, counsellors and any other relevant individuals for the purpose of this study.

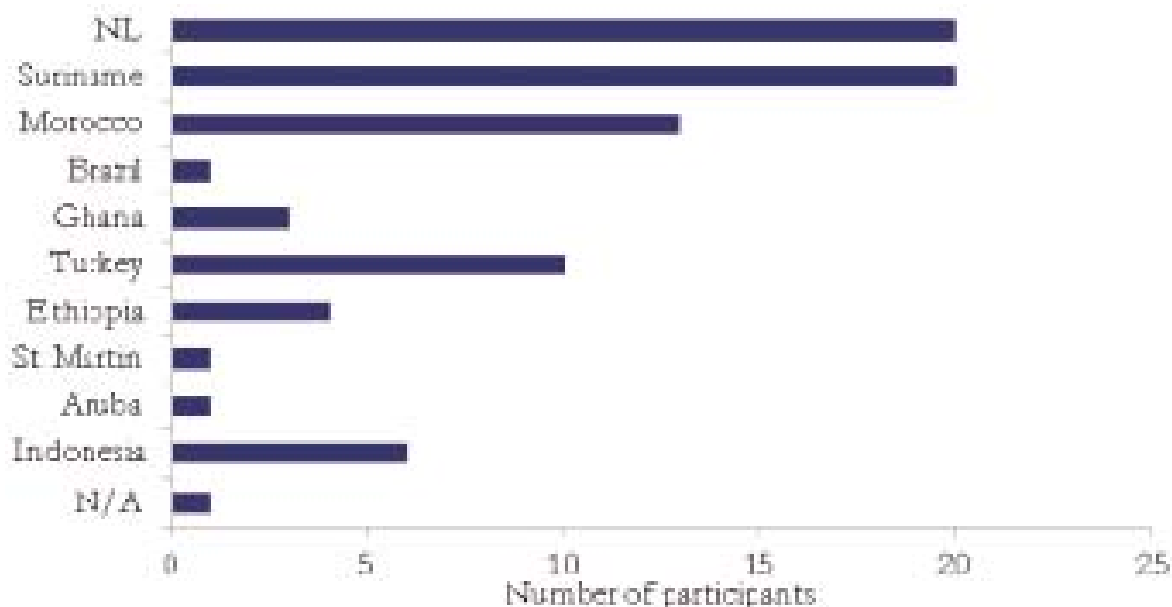
### **Types of Service Involved in the Research**

Participants were asked to inform us of their perceptions of the women who access their services and their prevalence. According to the respondents, approximately 43% have many clients who are black females. Another 31% are comprised of migrant women while refugee women make up only 5% of the clientele encountered. To expand on this, only two of the professional respondents claim to experience a high level of refugee clientele while the rest only encountered a few or none at all. With regards to the provision of services, respondents were asked whether or not they receive requests from women to speak only with other women, as such about 84% of the respondents answered in the affirmative. Furthermore, when asked whether or not this request should be adhered to, the respondents answered 95% in the affirmative.

When asked which services are the most difficult to provide to the respondents, approximately 50% claimed that childcare and mental health are among the most difficult while 20% claim that economic and legal support are amongst the most difficult. Housing and healthcare were the least difficult of the services totalling 11% with a 19% abstention (see Figure 13).

When asked whether or not violence against women (VAW) was becoming more visible, 65% said “yes” whilst 23% said “no” with an abstention of about 12%. When asked whether or not there was an increase of VAW in the Netherlands, 62% of the respondents answered yes, while 24% answered no with an abstention of about 14%. Respondents were asked the question, “Among the

Figure 14: Services



professional and organizational patterns for anti-VAW services listed below, choose two that you think are more effective and useful to properly face VAW, also considering the migration contexts and different nationalities and cultures present in the territory you are working in” To this question, 56% of professionals agreed that a network of key private and public services that work on gender violence led by BMR and white Dutch women is essential. Secondly, 33% believe that there should be rules across all services and woman’s organizations with sensitive approaches to the gender perspective. The remaining participants, 11% believe that there should be separate networks of common services working on gender based violence.

### Questions on Risks of Violence and Definitions of Violence

When asked the question, “Among the typologies and situations relating to VAW listed below, choose the two you consider more important to increase your specific training on VAW”, 33% of professionals replied that institutional violence by service providers, officials and bureaucracy was most important. Second, 27% states that sexual harassment and molestation in the workplace was most important. Following that, 23% stated that domestic violence was most important. 17% stated the importance of the issue of forced and early marriages.

When asked which types of women were most at risk of violence, respondents indicated that 36% of women suffering from low self-esteem were at risk of experience gender-based violence. Women who do not know how to handle conflict situations with partners accounted for 21% of the total. Women who are psychologically dependent on their partners account for 16% of the total. Women who do not conform to their partners expectations accounted for 15%

of the total professional surveyed. Lastly, women who centre their lives on their partner account for 12% of the data collected.

When asked about intercultural relationships and the prevalence of abuse amongst specific spousal combinations the data collected indicated that 52% of the clients experienced violence from migrant/refugee males against the same minority group. 50% of Dutch white women experienced violence from men of the same race. Furthermore, 27% of minority women experienced violence at the hands of white Dutch men. 13% of the respondents indicated that violence was experienced by white Dutch women at the hands of migrant/refugee males with an abstention of 19%.

One of the questions asked to respondents was “Among the expressions listed below, choose three that, in your opinion, catch better the most important meanings you consider in defining VAW in intimate relationships. To this, 63% considered power abuse to be the most important meanings in defining VAW. 38% considered disrespect to be of secondary importance. 33% consider the control over another person’s life to be the third most significant aspect of VAW, followed by imposing ones will upon another (23%), denial of another person’s needs (23%), psychological coercion (17%), limiting personal freedom (17%), physical coercion (15%), hurting of dignity (13%), forced intercourse (8%), humiliation (2%), arrogance (2%) and abuse of loved ones (2%) with an 8% abstention.

Another important question was, “Among the expressions listed below, choose three that, in your opinion, catch better the most important principles of action and politics you consider should be implemented for a society free from VAW”. The majority of the respondents stated that mutual respect of action in the two different social roles (gender) is most important. Followed by, recognizing the rights of women (35%), equal rights between men and women (35%), implementation of the legal recognition of different ways to define family models (35%), implementation of gender equality through affirmative action and quotas for women including women BMR (33%), equality for women and men in the family and society (27%), recognition of equal rights and duties both in the family and in society (27%), implementation of gender equality through affirmative action and quotas for women including women BMR (13%), respect for women (10%), for couples, the joint choices for both men and women (4%), implementation of the legal recognition of different ways to define family models (2%), with a 10% abstention.

### 6.3. A Synthetic Overview

Of the clients encountered by professionals, 43% are black women, followed by migrant women who total 31%. Only 5% of professionals encounter refugee women. With regards to the most difficult services to provide for BMR women,

50% of professional claim that childcare and mental health care are the most difficult, followed by economic and legal support at 20%. Based on the difficulties encountered by professionals in providing certain types of aid, it is not surprising that 56% agree that a key network of private and public services working on gender violence, led by BMR and white Dutch women is essential in increasing the effectiveness and availability of services.

With regards to what trainings are considered to be most important in providing effective care, 33% of professional agreed that training on institutional violence by service providers, officials and bureaucracy was the most important, followed by 27% of professionals who agreed that training on sexual harassment and molestation in the workplace is the most important thing.

In terms of intercultural relations amongst BMR women in the Netherlands, it was found that 50% of the respondents considered power abuse to be the most important thing adding to violence against women in the Netherlands. Another 32% believe disrespect is integral to VAW and lastly 18% of respondents believe that psychological coercion is the most important aggregate of VAW.

With regards to the most important factors which contribute to a society free from VAW, 48% of respondents believe that mutual respect for different social and gender roles is most important in catching the important principles of action and politics that should be implemented for a society free from VAW. 28% of respondents believe that equal rights are the most important in conjunction with another 24% who consider recognizing the rights of women to be the most important.

## 6.4. Focus Groups

### Objectives and Methodology

TIYE organized 3 focus groups. A description of the meetings is provided in the chart below.

The accommodation and environment we used for the meeting of the focus groups was safe, comfortable and non-threatening for women, also it was culturally appropriate for all. We were sitting in an ellipse like setting so that no one was left out. We also tried to encourage and create an atmosphere in which women could feel free to make their contributions. We also tried to give guidance to the group without cultural biases, so that women could freely share their thoughts and feelings. In order to do this we let each women know that we appreciated her and that she was valued. We treated them with respect as we would like to be treated with respect ourselves.

Table 15: Focus Groups in The Netherlands

<p><b>First focus group with counsellors</b></p>	<p>Attended: 7 women and 3 counsellors.          Ethnicity of counsellors:          Surinamese-Dutch; Philippine-Dutch; White Dutch; Ethiopian-Dutch; Turkish-Dutch; Somalis-Dutch, Moroccan-Dutch, Dutch Antilleans          Ages : 27-57 year old;          Work experience: 3-25 years          Topics: <i>What kind of violence do you think BMR women faced the most?</i>          Honour related violence; institutional violence; symbolic violence; domestic violence and all other forms of violence that you can find within domestic violence.</p>
<p><b>Second focus group with BMR women</b></p>	<p>Attended: 13 women and 3 counsellors.          Ethnicity of women:          India, Africa, Ecuador, Suriname, Somalia, Ethiopia and Philippine.          Age: 29 – 61          Topics:  <i>What did you feel the first time when you enter the office for help and how was it when you left that office the first day? Do you remember your expectations?</i>          Answer: Well, I was very insecure, I did not know what I could expect. I was trembling all over. I was expecting help, but did not know what kind of help I would get. I was crying, etc. (This has already been reported).</p>
<p><b>Third focus group with counsellors and BMR women</b></p>	<p>Attended: 14 women and 4 counsellors in Den Hague (NL)          Ethnicity: very diverse;          Age: 26 -63years          Topics: <i>Tell us your name and an important thing that happen in your life.</i>          Answers: important things that happen in their life were the birth of their daughter or son or children. Some mention their youth when they were growing up, they were so happy. Another one said the most important step was going to look for help. Another that she will never forget all the pain she had to face. The fear the first time she was battered, etc. (This has already been reported).</p>

Furthermore we establish ground rules that will ensure a safe environment for everyone, like:

1. Everyone should listen to each other
2. Avoid judging
3. Accept all types of experiences and opinions as equally worthy.
4. There is no right or wrong answer nor one single solution.
5. You should discuss things as a group.
6. A report of the discussion will be made. If you want a copy you can write your name and address at the end of this setting.

There were 7 professionals, one expert and one assistant.

## Focus Group with Counsellors

The professionals' ethnicities were: Surinamese-Dutch; Philippine-Dutch; White Dutch; Ethiopian-Dutch; Turkish-Dutch; Somalis-Dutch, Moroccan-Dutch, Dutch Antilleans.

Everyone introduced themselves. Some were working for 3 years or 5 or 10 years. One was working for 25 years.

They were working either for the police, or in a health centre or in a shelter or welfare office, help desk, women's centre or a training centre for battered women. Some offices were from a public office, or semi-governmental institute which belongs to a public office.

Their professions were: police officer, social worker, health care worker, trainer empowerment and in preventing/combating violence against women and girls, experience expert, community intervention and lawyer

Our question was: «Since you also work specific with BMR women can you tell me which groups visit your office, what are their ethnicities, and what are the questions they have?». Different types of groups visited the services where our participants work: sometimes high educated women, grassroots women, young or older women, women with or without children, married and not married. Their identities were: Surinamese-Dutch; Philippine-Dutch; White Dutch; Ethiopian-Dutch; Turkish-Dutch; Somalis-Dutch, Jamaican-Dutch. Moroccan-Dutch, Dutch Antilleans, and different types of Africans.

The questions they addressed varied from looking for shelter a temporary house or legal support, counselling support, economic support, to children caring counselling support or children related problems, health care.

## What Kind of Violence BMR Women Faced the Most?

To make it clear, violence is not only something that happens to only BMR women and girls. Almost every other women in the EU experience male violence or gender based violence during her live time. One in five will fall into domestic violence. At least one in ten will be raped or forced to sexual acts etc. Violence against women and girls is the most wide spread human rights abuse within the EU, and in times of recession such as these thing only get worse. There are different forms of violence against women and girls. They are for example: honour related violence, institutional violence, symbolic violence, domestic violence and all other forms of violence that you can find within domestic violence.

## Honour-Related Violence

Honour-related violence stems from traditions that have their origin in a society without central authority and are characterized by paternalism and collectivism. Honour-related violence in the vision of some of the professionals is not a phe-

nomenon that can be associated with any particular religion, i.e. Islam, or the population or culture of a particular country, i.e. Turkey. Honour killings are found indeed in countries with diverse cultures of the Indian islands to Latin America, both among Hindus, Muslims, Jews and Christians and others.

*Honour-related violence includes any form of mental or physical violence, committed from a collective mentality in response to a (threat of) violation of the honour of a man or a woman and therefore it's the family honour, which the outside world is aware of or may become aware of.*

(Working definition Ministry of Justice, Beke 2005)

The concept of honour-related violence is the umbrella term for all forms of coercion and psychological and physical violence to prevent a member of the family a “mistake” that puts harm to the family honour in the community, and all violence against the (alleged) *eerschender* to the violated honour. The importance of family honour is even in many populations with a group culture. The cultures are particularly Mediterranean, Middle East, South and Central Asia. Also among Roma, Hindu, Muslims, Jews and Christian Orthodox communities in Netherlands, you find honour related violence.

## **Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behaviours by one partner against another in an intimate relationship such as marriage, dating, family or cohabitation. Domestic violence has many forms, including physical aggression or assault (hitting, kicking, biting, shoving restraining, slapping, throwing objects) or threats there of sexual abuse, emotional abuse, controlling or domineering, intimidation, stalking, passive/covert abuse (e.g. neglect) and economic deprivation. Awareness and documentation of domestic violence differs from country to country and from area to area.

## **Institutional Violence**

Black, Migrant and Refugee women experience Institutional violence because it is most times a standard practice in society (governmental institutions and their officers) that has become a destructive force and has a negative impact on black and immigrant women or ethnic minority women and men and youth. Most of the time they don't get the right answers when information is asked.

*They just don't tell them their rights, which makes it very difficult for BMR women to deal adequately on their questions.*

*Lack of knowledge of their human rights causes more frustrations in their cases.*

*Lots of these women suffer more because of this form of violence committed to them.*

## Symbolic Violence

Symbolic violence is another form of violence BMR women, men and their children face. This is a form of violence that you might not see if you don't want to or if someone does not bring it to your attention. These women, men and especially children give specific expression of it during the so called *Sinterklaas feest*, the Dutch celebration of Black Pete and Santa Claus, the servant of Santa who looks different from the average Santa Claus we all know during Christmas worldwide. The Dutch one comes in November in the Netherlands with a lot of "Black Peters". *Sinterklaas* looks like a kind of bishop and uses dominant methods to control Black Peter. The Black Peter is dressed in a Moorish costume, he has curly hair, he is painted in black with feathers on his hat, he has a big red mouth, he speaks broken Dutch, he is stupid, he can't remember one simple message, he is the servant of Santa Claus, and has a big linen bag with him that is to put the naughty children in and bring them to Spain if they don't promise to behave. He also has an old fashioned broom with him to whip naughty children and he also has a book where the names of all nice kids are written and what they want as a present. He also has candies which he throws in the air for the kids, who should fight to grab some from the floor. A lot of BMR families (the black and colour kids and families) feel very humiliated and say that this are the symbols who teach people how to look at blacks. The same type of symbols are displayed every second Tuesday in September and by High lights of the Dutch queen. She takes a ride in her golden carriage and on that carriage you can see how black slaves are kneeling for white people and also people of Indonesian origin in a noticeably subordinated position to the superior white men. These are all symbols of how to look at black people and it is a violation against their human rights. BMR kids are very confused during these days, they do not want to go to school during this period, a so called "children's fest".

## Migration

Migration policy is not gender neutral. Despite the proportional male/female share, migration is not a gender-neutral phenomenon in the Netherlands. The migrant being a man or a woman has profound implications for the entire migration process and for all parties involved. The position of female migrants differs considerably from that of the male. Gender relations and power differences determine who migrates, why, through which channel, where and in what situation the migrant eventually land.

## Reasons

Men and women apparently have the same economic, political or humanitarian motives to migrate. Both set the stage to escape political persecution and war violence, from the desire for a better life, to escape poverty, to include social and



family pressure to leave. And yet women migrate for very specific reasons, inherent in the fact that they are women. The main reasons for women to leave are:

- Private atmosphere. Entrenched subordinate position compared with men in the family.
- Economic discrimination in the labour market and other institutions, global feminization of poverty.
- Ethnic and cultural reasons. Oppressive and female unfriendly traditions such as forced marriage, repudiation, polygamy, virginity coercion, harmful practices like female genital mutilation.
- Violence on the run from sex-based violence such as honour killings, rape as weapon of war.
- Follow migration. Family reunification, which is very difficult due to the fact that there are so many restrictions especially in terms of income, which is also partly gender discriminatory on account of the fact that women often make less money than men, therefore they have greater difficulty in migrating and supporting their loved ones. In turn, there is greater dependency on men by women for migration. Furthermore, BMR women make less money than white women in the Netherlands which creates a greater gap for BMR women.

While family reunification is still an important reason to leave, women increasingly migrate alone. Whether they come from Africa, the Caribbean, the Maghreb or Eastern Asia or Europe a common reason for all (BMR) immigrant women is the desire for more autonomy. Although their main motive is of economic nature, a recent phenomenon is the search for independence and self-reliance is always there.

### **Focus Group with Migrant Women**

First, the participants were welcomed. Then we introduced ourselves. The moderator explained why we had this research meeting, and invited the participants to speak out freely and share their ideas, meanings, doubt's and suggestions with us. What they could expect from and the role of the moderator. She explained that there are no good or bad answers. The point is to let us know what they found, what their meaning was and why. There will be a report (anonymous) of this meeting. If they are interested they may receive a copy of the final report. After the meeting they could write their name on this list. We asked if they had any questions before we begin. No one had questions.

### **Introductory Questions**

Tell us your name and an important thing that happened in your life. Each participant introduced herself and explained that the important things that hap-

pened in their life were the birth of their daughter or son or children. Some mention their youth when they were growing up, they were so happy. Another one said the most important step was going to look for help; another that she will never forget all the pain she had to face. The fear the first time she was battered.

What was your best experience when you visit our office, a counsellor asked?

*The counsellor was very nice and she could imagine how I felt or she had a lot of empathy so it was not so difficult for me to tell her my story.*

What was your worst experience?

*I had a terrible experience since this counsellor was new there, she did not know where to send me. Through her insecurity I became more insecure then I was when I visit the office, then I start crying and saying that I had expected help, instead I was very confused and that it looked like I was worst out. The counsellor was also upset she could not get hold to someone with more working experience. Not know how to deal with the cultural background of the victim. It is difficult to express my feelings without being emotional.*

What did you feel the first time when you enter this office and how was it when you left that office the first day? Do you remember your expectations?

*Well I was very insecure; I did not know what I could expect. I was trembling all over. I was expecting help, but did not know what kind of help I would get. I was crying. I had a terrible night so she looked at me, comforted me and offered me a cup of tea. I was so "happy" in a way. After a good talk I left the office very released, and felt like I could stand everything that comes up. I had no specific expectations except getting help to get out of the miserable situation I was in. I was expecting to go to a shelter; I had also some clothes with me. I was wondering what would happen to my children, how they would go to school. If my partner would pick them up and that I would not see them anymore.*

If you should describe this contact with one word, which word would you chose?

*Personal, cold, professional, business, friendly, warm, nice, Christian, excellent, insecure, mother, sister, friend.*

Now you are in the program, do you get what you want/need?

*Most of the time, I have to move to another city and there they will help me find a house, and a school for the children and help me find a job. I did not get everything yet,*

*because it takes time, but I am patient and willing to wait for the better. My partner promised to go into therapy with the family and they are making an appointment for us.*

Did you have goals before? Are they the same as what you have to deal with now?

*Yes in a way. My goals were to be happy and healthy and having a caring partner, unfortunately I went through a hell, but now I am happy again but single.*

*Economic and socially independent at the moment not everything is correct, I have learned to take it by the day. Step by step.*

The meeting was interesting, but intensive and sometimes emotional. The counsellors will point out the remarks in their relevant teams.

### **Focus Group with Women and Professionals**

Highly beneficial were the typologies given by professionals and survivors of perpetrators of violence and potential victims. When asked about the perpetrators of domestic violence, the following topic received a great deal of discussion. One prominent type of abuser is known as the “lover boy”, which is a type of pimp. Their particular method or ‘modus operandi’, as described during the discussion, involves the seduction and isolation of traditional, yet vulnerable young women from their families. This separation and subsequent isolation, as said by participants is a common occurrence amongst young minority females who find themselves in abusive relationships on account of these young men who attempt to sever familial ties between women and their families in order to exert control over women. This is just one example of the types of dangers and experiences described by group members.

Prevalent during the discussion was traditional gender roles and the impact they have on violence against BMR women. To expand, it was explained by participants in the discussion that to have a man at home was a status symbol, defining a woman’s position in her community. Women’s roles, at least as described in countries of origin, are mainly domestic and education is more often directed towards men first as women’s education is sometimes considered secondary. Therefore, women are in a position where they must accept certain circumstances imposed upon them by their husbands and families if they intend to fulfil their gender roles. When discussing familial pressures and gender violence, participants described family members who actually send abused women back to their abusers, i.e. husbands, familial pressures to remain in an abusive relationship for the sake of traditions, the pressure to remain in abusive relationships for the sake of the children and the shame and stigma that can accompany women who seek out independence directed towards them by their family and community.

The women also stated that the family members of the husband could also become abusers as they may turn the wife into a servant, thus perpetuating the cycle of violence. They claim that this can be the result of guilt, responsibility- i.e. to children, desperation and low self-confidence. They state that this occurs in some cultures where the Koran doctrine is more prevalent but less in the Netherlands due to institutional protections already in place. A great deal of discussion was focused on financial dependence as a means of VAW, as one woman stated:

*Because the husband was the provider, she had nothing to offer and so, she must suffer as penance. Financial dependence decreases leverage and independence.*

This lack of financial independence coupled with social isolation and a lack of familial support for those females living away from home with their spouses and husbands increase the risk of VAW due to a lack of self-sufficiency and social support. This situation, as described by one participant:

*It's worse for teen mothers who are more vulnerable due to inexperience and limited financial resources. Moreover, teens are seen as bringing this situation on themselves and therefore experience stigma and social isolation, thus increasing their risk of negative male relations and potentially unsafe living situations.*

Participants indicated that suicide could be the ultimate effect of the guilt one can experience as a result of violence against women.

Lastly, when considering the role of the Netherlands in combating VAW, the participants stated that in Holland there is decent protection for women, should they decide to leave their abusers. Both the victim and the perpetrator receive help with domestic violence. However, help with VAW does not involve on the spot assistance, but assistance is there so one can come to a solution in the future. On the local level, there is a general confidence in the police, doctors, counsellors and women's shelters.

## SOCIAL INDICATORS

### Migrants and People with Migrant Origin and on VAW in the Project's Territory

Table 16: Distribution of study sample versus the National Dutch population

	Sample		Dutch National population	
	Native Dutch	Non-Native Dutch	Native Dutch	Non-Native Dutch
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	53%	31%	49%	50%
Female	47%	60%	51%	50%
<b>Age</b>				
Up to 24 years	9%	21%	13%	20%
25-34 years	19%	34%	15%	27%
35-49 years	30%	33%	29%	34%
50-64 years	28%	10%	25%	13%
65 plus	19%	2%	18%	5%
<b>Education</b>				
Low	16%	6%	26%	42%
Middle	44%	43%	51%	47%
High	40%	51%	24%	11%
<b>Region</b>				
Den Hague	9%	35%	10%	36%
West	31%	28%	30%	26%
City Suburbs (Randgemeenten)	4%	6%	4%	5%
Noord (North)	12%	5%	11%	3%
Oost (East)	20%	15%	21%	15%
Zuid (South)	25%	12%	25%	15%

Table 17: Victims of domestic violence, categorized by gender and ethnicity (%).

	Antillean - Aruban		Moroccan		Suriname		Turkish	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Domestic violence	41	40	10	20	26	29	20	23
Physical violence	31	36	6	16	26	27	16	15
Emotional violence	24	25	5	17	16	22	15	19
Sexual violence	9	15	2	4	2	10	2	5

Source: Van Dijk *et al.* 2002

Table 18: Victims of domestic violence. Comparison between minority males and females and white Dutch males and female (%)

	Minority males and females			White Dutch males and females		
	M	W	Tot	M	W	Tot
Domestic violence	21	27	24	43	46	45
Physical violence	18	22	20	35	34	35
Emotional violence	14	21	17	26	30	28
Sexual violence	3	8	5	13	30	21

Source: Van Dijk *et al.* 2002

Table 19: Ethnicity offender probation group in comparison with the Dutch population group

	Offender Group	Dutch National Population
Native Dutch	65%	78%
Turkish	5%	2%
Moroccan	5%	2%
Surinamese	8%	2%
Antillean and Aruban	5%	1%
Other Ethnicity	12%	15%

Table 20: Sex of victims of domestic violence compared to intensity of violence among minorities and white Dutch population

	Native Dutch						Non-Native Dutch					
	Intensity						Intensity					
	Occ.	Low	Med.	High	V. high	Tot	Occ.	Low	Med.	High	V. high	Tot
M	46	42	56	48	35	<b>46</b>	49	61	48	49	40	<b>50</b>
W	54	58	44	52	65	<b>54</b>	51	39	52	51	60	<b>50</b>
Tot	100	100	100	100	100	<b>100</b>	100	100	100	100	100	<b>100</b>

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### 7.1. Some Reflections on the Five Surveys

The results of the five surveys are not directly comparable for many reasons. Methodologically speaking, they differ for the sampling, the administrative technique and also, in some cases, for the different linguistic connotations. In any case, we very well know how misleading the “claim to objectivity” of quantitative data could be. Results’ interpretation can be conceived as “projective games” for the researchers who are called to give comments on numbers and percentages. By reading results, we can distinguish two levels: a first descriptive level, where results are showed as “naked (approximate) numbers”, and a second interpretative level, where results are evaluated. From this second level the discussion among interpretations and different normative statements takes place, even though numbers are never to be considered “objective”. Considering the inter-cultural aims of the project the interpretative part is probably the most interesting one.

How to consider, for example, the agreement with a provocative statement that draws a parallel between some illegal “female genital modifications” (where some respondents would prefer the word “mutilations”) and “our” legal aesthetic surgery practices?

And when 10% of respondents agree with the statement that considers “honour killing” as a Muslim sole prerogative, should we look at the broad majority or be worried because one professional out of ten agrees with this discriminative statement?

Beyond the “objective simulacrum” of numbers, this survey has been useful for its capacity to detect different and sometimes overlapping interpretations and approaches on VAW, both by respondents and by the project partners.

The partners preferred to focus on issues linked to the local and national public debates. In fact, looking at results, national legal frames (as in the Spanish and Catalan cases) and public/political debates proved to be very influential among both respondents and researchers.

### Requests to the Services and Services Demands

The most difficult demands to be fulfilled are generally related to social welfare support (economic, housing and job), except in the Dutch sample where “child-care” and “mental health” supports are considered the most difficult requests to

meet. That could be due to different “vocations” of the services involved in the different surveys. Economic and social disadvantage are considered as very important dimensions with respect to increasing VAW (this point was particularly explored by Barcelona’s questionnaire, with a specific question). In order to face VAW in an intercultural context, services consider the networking of private/public services with native/migrant women as the best organizational pattern.

Padua’s services are the one that show a major “anomic” concern: they ask more specific training on national, European or international laws and directives, and consider having “shared protocols” as the best organizational pattern to face VAW.

## **Stereotypes and Common Perceptions**

Let us start from a very important point: in all regional contexts the majority perceive VAW both as increasing and more visible than in the past. Its visibility is mainly attributed to mass media and to women changing attitudes, who report it more. Another common general point is that violence is mainly considered in domestic/family contexts with important psychological connotations.

The perception of the most common typologies of violence considering the migrant context is more controversial. Barcelona and Padua samples present similar results: VAW is perceived quite often as acted by migrant men against migrant women, whereas in Madrid and Helsinki professionals answered in a rather different way, choosing as the most common typology of VAW “native men against native women”. In the Netherlands, results seem to be between the two, even if they are closer to Barcelona and Padua’s results. Although the question sounded confusing for some respondents (the absolute or relative VAW rates had to be considered?) and provocative/offending for others (the question risks to reify the native/migrant distinction), results showed a controversial point to be addressed, in order to unveil well-established stereotypes and perceptions.

These different perceptions shared a common point: VAW is not generally perceived as crossing the imaginary borders of “communities”: “native against native”, or “migrant against migrant”, are in all samples perceived as much more common than “native against migrant” or “migrant against native”.

This is an aspect to consider also when we interpret the capacity of services to detect specific risks of violence for MRM women, related to their legal, economic, social and migrant condition.

The last is a very important point: MRM women social vulnerability, product of a combination of economic, social, symbolic and legal conditions, are generally recognized as critical aspect to be considered, but not always as much as it would be expected. The multiple types of discrimination that they could face are not always recognized.

“Society support men’s supremacy” and “men consider natural that women are dependant” are generally recognized as the best explanation for VAW persistence by professionals from the different regions. But these “common-sense feminist” and very general statements, were challenged and sometimes undermined when statements and questions were more specific.

For example, the controversial question on women’s individual characteristics related to the risks of VAW (for some respondents the question was insulting towards women victims of violence) showed unexpected results: with the partial exception of the Dutch respondents, all samples indicate “psychologically dependent women” and “women suffering for low self-esteem” as the ones being more at risk of VAW. This result needs to be interpreted, because in its ambivalence it is possible to trace the recognition of structural symbolic violence on women (that possibly makes them disempowered in intimate relationships) or the symbolic violence acted by services on clients who risk to be labelled in “common sense” psychological terms, and “blamed”, for not being able to quit a violent intimate relationship. Surprisingly, the statement regarding “women that do not conform to their partner expectations” is always among the less chosen.

Generally, psychological frames are competing with social and cultural discourses in explaining the phenomenon of VAW. The most interesting to investigate would be how cultural or individual/psychological categories are most often used as common sense categories in everyday practices in order to define or label different situations and peoples in an intercultural context.

### **The Limits of Liberal Attitudes**

Among professionals of this European sample, a “rather liberal” (as from Finnish partners’ definition) and “gender-friendly” attitude is shared. It concerns sexual orientations and women’s rights on body: the lack of contraception or abortion and the negation of same-sex couples’ rights are very broadly considered as forms of social violence.

The “liberal” attitude finds its own limits when it comes across issues such as freely-chosen prostitution, the use of burqa, or the recognition of different forms of “family formation”.

For example, considering the “sex work” issue, the stress on individual free-choice is generally rejected by Padua, Madrid and Helsinki: for the majority of respondents, free-choice prostitution is still a form of VAW, while Barcelona’s sample is divided (we do not have the Netherland’s results on that). Moreover “poverty” is considered, with different degrees of agreement, the main factor explaining prostitution.

The intersection of cultural differences with gender and class differences make the mentioned issues of prostitution, burqa and family formation forms in relation to VAW very difficult to be addressed and interpreted by professionals.

The distinction (cfr. Bimbi) of an “integration into (our) rights” approach and “recognition of differences” approach, although with overlapping areas of meaning, could be useful to interpret the partners’ interpretative attitudes.

## 7.2. Remarks on Focus Group Results

The heterogeneity of results on focus groups reflects the differences between the five contexts of the project, the differences between the relation and work networks of the partners, but also the different choices related to the training activities.

We verified the difficulty to join the definitions of violence established by social indicators with the definitions emerged during the focus groups’ discussions.

In the Madrid’s case the comparison between migrant women and migrant men highlighted the difficulties of men to reflect about stereotypes, whereas women stress the need to changes and they identify gender equality as the solution to overcome violence.

The Dutch team delved into the cultural identification related to the use of the self-assigned ethnic labels, which proves that the identity theme as self-assignment cannot be confused with the essentialism given by the labels of the dominant majority.

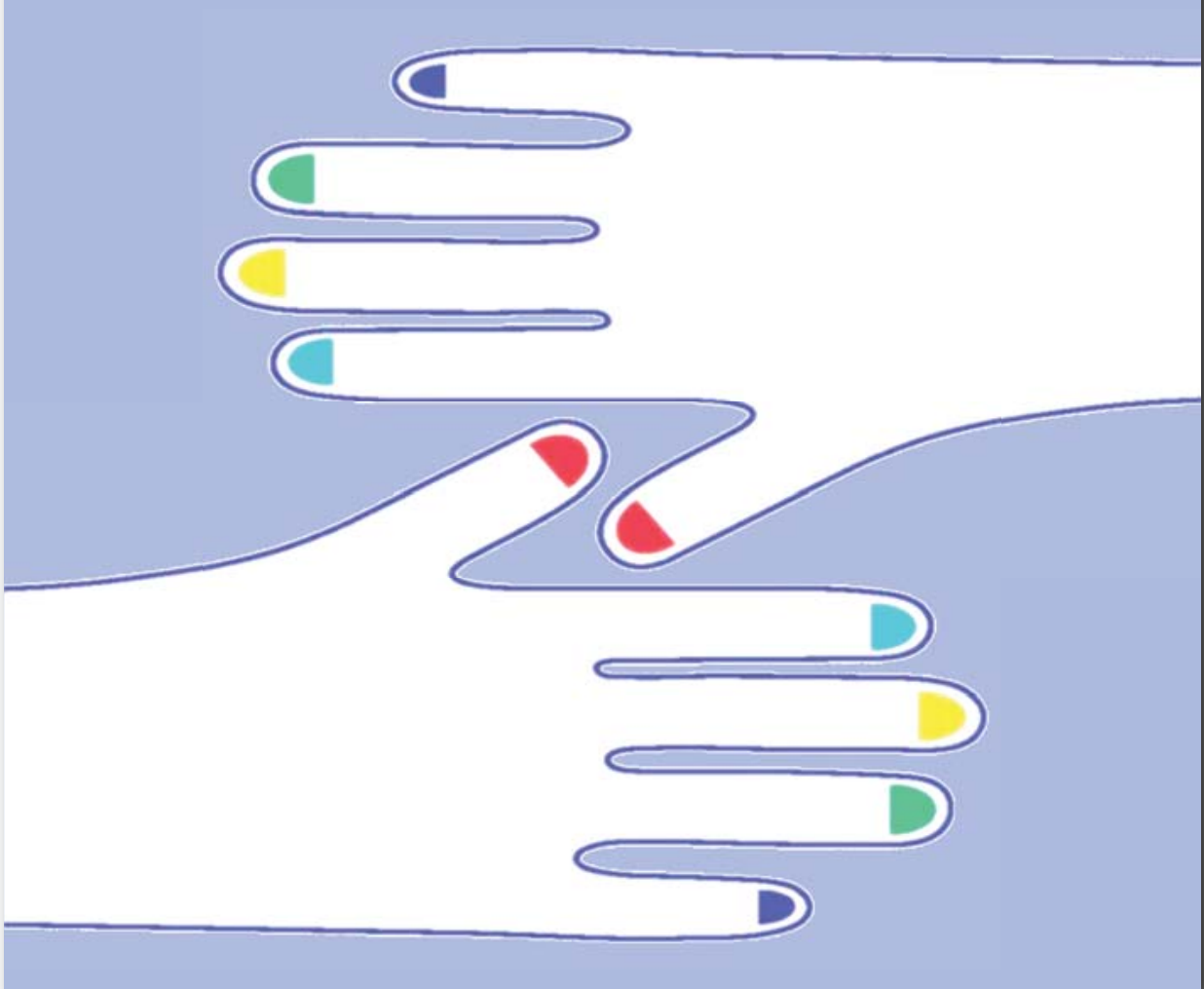
In the same way, the Finnish success involving Roma women underlined that the construction of a positive peer-to peer relation can overcome labelling barriers that entail a *de facto* stigma.

The Padua and Barcelona’s experiences stress the difficulty of professionals in overcoming an individualist and psychologist approach to violence.

The focus groups highlighted the necessity to develop transcultural vocabularies about the definitions of violence, in order to improve the comprehension between different languages and meanings and to find more effective translations of gender human rights in the practices to contrast violence, in the social policies and above all between women of majority and minority groups.

## Part 2

# Training Activities and Project Results: Self-Empowerment, Peer-to-Peer Recognition and Promotion of MREM Women's Transcultural Capabilities





The pathway containing group discussions, training meetings and the establishment and facilitation of self-help group can be considered as a Laboratory of the core activities in order to gain the main project output.

The five teams worked as helpers to give birth to a group of MREM women, from different social locations and cultural background, that would be able to speak out and to raise awareness for them and for other women on gender-based violence in everyday life, communities, neighbourhood and families. During the Laboratory, women improved their capabilities also to support VAW victims and obtaining the best access to women's rights resources in the local welfare system. In any context the MREM women group of *SPEAK OUT!* would be able to establish and to compel gender respectful relationships, acting also to overcome racial and cultural prejudices. This group could be considered the best result of the project if it would become a permanent multicultural safe and friendly space and network for MREM women and if it will be oriented to expand its network to other women working in the social context with similar aims.

It is a difficult aim, because the five teams are aware about the common difficulties, more or less present in the different contexts.

MREM women's common experiences as the isolation and racialization in the five Countries, and their lack of information and knowledge on their rights, and of the rules for the access to welfare and anti-violence resources, could influence the weakness of their voice in the public and private worlds especially on the VAW issues, considering also the prevalence of the men's voices compared to the women's in contexts such as the family or their groups of belonging. To avoid racialization in their discourse, many Italian scholars do not use terms as "race" or "ethnic, ethnicity" and similar words referring to migrant people or minorities. For that the Italian team will use in the Italian report the acronym MRM instead of MREM.

Furthermore, following a European integrated and common perspective as an expected result from the Laboratory, it is necessary to take into consideration also the differences between the partners, relating to their professional experiences, to the rules of the gender welfare regimes where they are operating, to the national rules of migration and to the different composition of the MREM women in their territory. These differences influenced the teams in their working style with women in the organizational term and in the training methodologies. In the work in progress of the Laboratory we considered differences like limita-

tion as well as resources for the action, searching for some convergences instead of the homogeneity between us. At the beginning of the project we were five actors with five consolidated and different working experiences. Our convergence was compared and defined on the basis of a twofold methodological perspective. First, we agreed that the participation of the MREM women to a process of information and knowledge on VAW issues would be successful if they could develop a personal self-consciousness attitude producing their mutual recognition as positive gender model on the basis of the value of their similarities and differences. Second, the consistency and the practical utility of the training could be demonstrated achieving the women's empowerment as recognition of their capabilities to act as authoritative subjects in the training group as well as in the society. The *SPEAK OUT!* work in progress oriented participants to be personally and collectively confident also in order to represent women's voices in the public space.

The training activities developed similar paths in the five contexts, mainly using some version of story-telling method. The stories and experiences of the MREM women constituted the background for comprehension of the legislatives and political frame; the practical activities mixed individually and collective works; the self-help activities aimed at verifying the autonomy developed by women at the end of the training activities and at trying future perspective of agency.

MONIKA's team confirmed «the project found that the use of multi-dimensional methodology was potentially powerful. In our case the storytelling method was oral, written (drawings) and digital (videos). Stories told by the participants helped to relate personally to the subject of discussions and add an emotional connection. The lecture method was used in this project, because the techniques involved served as the basis for other methods of training. Those techniques apply not only to lectures, but to many other kinds of presentations in which oral explanations play a secondary, but important, role. Working in groups was a good way to use different skills, knowledge and experiences that women had».

Starting from the common goal of “to give voice to the women's experiences”, in every context we decided to compare some gender narratives and VAW issues with the life experiences of the women participating at the *SPEAK OUT!* activities.

It is relevant to underline the convergence as well as the different choices on narratives or the differences in stressing on some of them, combined with the different objective position of the teams in the field of migration issues and in the national or local history of women's agency.

One of the most widespread narratives on VAW stresses the victim's pain as central issue for the anti-violence women's agency. This victimization perspective is avoided by the five teams. We mainly have in common a perspective underlining the women's capabilities to come up with positive answers from the violent



situations if they are supported by a gender friendly network. During the Laboratory we did not forget the victim's pain but our displays were mainly oriented to and by the women's strength to overcome the victimization, acting as personal and political subjects.

Today, considering the EU and the Council of Europe, we could find two other main narratives on women's agency and on the overcoming of VAW, relating also to different politics on migration. The first narrative concerns the centrality of gender rights, interpreted at the same time as national, European and universal. We could consider this narrative as available to MREM women in a European society searching for the gender equality and acting friendly with MREM people. The second narrative is mainly concerned with the dynamics between the recognition of differences and the processes of differentiation and racialization of MREM women. We could consider this narrative as a resource for a multi-diversity construction of EU, or as a risk relating to a narrow identity approach influencing the fragmentation of the European shared understandings. The two narratives have been used in different way in the fulfilment of the five Laboratories. In the multicultural dialogue during the Laboratories we discovered the multiplicity of the women's rights narratives within our groups of trainers and between the participants. Italy, Madrid Region and Catalonia, had as trainers mainly "native", white and non-migrant women, while some of the Finnish trainers had also migrant origin. In the Dutch team the narratives on rights and on differences could be considered at the same time as a part of a national narrative (The Netherlands history) and as a national/ethnic counter-narrative.

The different national, linguistic and cultural composition of the participants, their different language abilities, the level of education, the communitarian or religious belongings, the time spent in the receiving Countries, give different outcome of empathy for one of the considered narratives.

During the Laboratory, the intersectional approach, considering the contemporary interplay between gender, "race-ethnicity", class, age, length of migration, was under a practical scrutiny, involving also women who ideated the project.

No surprising that every team underlines the question "what does gender violence mean?". The sentence is implicitly suggesting that something needs to be added: "considering your personal experiences", "considering your personal experiences with the local institutions", "considering the women's rights implementation in your context", "considering the "normal" meaning in your life context", "considering the cultural differences among us".

Especially with the story-telling work, practical results for the Laboratory depended on the elaboration of the previous questions through the women's experiences, in order to achieve a profile of gendered capability to manage the possibility of agency on VAW issues with the sensibility required by the complexity of the different public and private spheres.



### 9.1. The Community Mentor Course and its Laboratories within the General Design of the Project

#### Method and Theory into Practice

Preventing gender-related violence is the general objective of the *SPEAK OUT!* project: the main goal we tried to achieve was the empowerment of a group of migrant women, migrant origin women, refugee women and women belonging to disadvantaged minorities.

This group was created after a background research (survey and focus groups) and the organization of some public debates. We proposed to these women a learning path aimed at developing their capabilities to act as active citizens in all their life contexts.

The training tried to offer participants, both as individuals and as a group, a chance to learn and reflect about:

- a) recognising gender-related violence;
- b) becoming a reference for the victims of violence;
- c) being considered authoritative in their life contexts, in the city and by the institutions.

The five partners of the project interpreted the objectives adapting them to the distinct contexts (Padua, Madrid, Barcelona, Hague, Helsinki).

To achieve these goals the Italian team decided to promote the profile of a Community Mentor: a person who operates in multicultural contexts through peer-to-peer relationships.

The profile of the Community Mentor was elaborated in an original manner, thus its traditional applications in homogeneous and delimited social contexts (e.g. students in a school) were not followed.

In the project *SPEAK OUT!* the role of the Community Mentor concerns explicitly a group of women, with different national origins and different cultural-linguistic characteristics, they are able to act as active citizens in the territory where they live, irrespective of their full formal citizenship. The group defined a perspective and a strategy of action against violence without referring to the distinct origin, even if these were defined. Even if the community of reference of the mentorship group can be, at the same time, the city (as life context and as a

network of institutions), the community of origin, the community they belong to, the neighbourhood, the family networks, the associations, the institutions.

The mentorship group will ask to its adherents to be engaged in preventing gender-related violence and supporting women who are at risk of, or who are victims of violence, by acting as a “bridge”:

- a) among women belonging to different national and cultural-linguistic groups;
- b) among migrant women, women with migrant origin, refugee women, women belonging to social minorities, and the welfare state system, the health care system, both public and private, and, more in general, the institutions;
- c) among distinct communities of origin, taking first into account women’s needs.

The whole training activities were primarily based on a process of recognition and self-empowerment of participants, starting from the pooling of direct and indirect experiences of violence and the different skills used to face, contrast and elaborate them. At the core of the training there was:

- a) assessments of migrant women about their positive and negative encounters in the city and in the country they are living in;
- b) their various perceptions of what gender-related violence is;
- c) meanings of gender and familiar relationships which are relevant to them

In the Italian case the legal and normative definitions of what is gender-related violence were not taken for granted, neither as acquired rights for the women in Italy and Europe so that to partly overcome asymmetries among trainers and participants to the project, and among “native” and migrant women. These definitions were presented but also sifted by participants through their experiences and critical discussions. Moreover the differences among the points of view of the “native” and migrant women, but also among migrant women from different countries and among women from the same national group on the female body, on the family structures and on the division of labour between women and men were considered as differences that had to be questioned discussing mutual prejudices, e.g. on the different meanings attributed to the ways of un-covering one’s body, face or head.

In the Italian case, the path was oriented to self-education in the perspective of a lifelong learning.

Even if it was offered to participants a Training Course focused on four Laboratories and especially oriented to self-reflection on some key-words (Beads&Words), which used the process of the story-telling to create individual or collective stories on violence and on how to escape from it and to produce a *Charter for Community Mentor against Violence on Women* that contains the guidelines for acting in the local society.

After the first step of group discussions, the Community Mentor Training Course was organized in four Laboratories. Following the project’s aim, the most

relevant laboratory was the Beads&Words Lab, the others were on Controversial Issues, on Welfare System and on Rights and Legislation.

On this basis – after the training – an autonomous path was also suggested to participants in order to transform the mentorship group in an Association of Community Mentors active in the territory.

The training path has been planned and discussed since the very beginning in different meetings of the Italian team, among the European partners and in local and international seminars. The planning stage has been a continuous work in progress involving participants and the networks of women, associations and institutions of the city. We can actually consider the whole project as a real work in progress that continues all the time.

However, since the beginning some key-concepts constituted crucial and emblematic references that the Italian team, the European coordinator of *SPEAK OUT!*, highlighted to its partners and to participants at the training. These concepts come from the feminist debate and from the contemporary discussions on social sciences. We chose to adopt some approaches in order to make the Project a place of mutual recognition for “native” and migrant women, who have many differences but share a common territory. The concepts we chose refer to experiences, practices or meanings considered recognizable by all women in the different European sites of the project and, in particular, recognizable by the “native” and migrant women living in Padua and engaged into defining the profile of the Mentor of Community against gender-based violence.

Especially in nowadays Europe, which is trying to re-define itself and in the cities of the contemporary multi-diversity, everyone can think of him/herself as inhabiting a “land of strangers”. Also the lecture halls that hosted the *SPEAK OUT!* project, could be read as spaces of strangeness by migrant women, who entered there for the first time, but also by trainers and the teachers, who were meeting non-standard students, because of the density of not-Italian nationalities, the variety of the accents and the colours of the skin.

Let us pretend this experience of strangeness as methodological approach can allow us to question the distinction native/migrant.

In addition, considering some of the experiences that women commonly share, due to the hegemony of the male construction of the world, we can all recognise ourselves as “outsider-within”, partially at the margins and partially inside, our social and everyday worlds. These two concepts were not used as points of departure to deny differences, social stratifications and inequalities among women, but on the other hand we used them to locate differences in the relational contexts where we could find differences of power but also opportunities for mutual recognition.

We used another concept: “borderlands of *mestiza*”, which is issued from post-colonial feminism, in order to solicit a debate on the everyday practices and experiences of transculturation that normally we do not notice, probably because they are at odds with our belongings.

For example Italian and not-Italian mothers that drink a coffee together after having brought their children to kindergarten/day care or to school, as the participants to the project did, represent nascent “borderlands of *mestiza*”. These are everyday life experiences that could partially disconfirm public discourses stating borders among “identities” or clashing of “cultures”, which consider identities and culture as material objects, consolidated forever and unchangeable in time and space.

Finally we used a “harder” concept, which is difficult to be recognised also by women themselves, that indicates an arena of settled conflicts: “symbolic violence”.

In the debate on violence against women the attention on what is refused by everyone is consolidated – the typologies of violence (physical, psychological, economic, domestic, intimate ...) – and it is common to everyone – the feeling of the wound inflicted to the victim, violated in her dignity and personal respect. The main thought on gender-related violence relates to violence and the suffering conceived by common sense as a specific, recognized and punishable phenomenology. But the roots of the violence, reproduced daily in every kind of society, even in the more opened ones, to recognise women’s rights, seem to remain mysterious.

The concept of symbolic violence focuses on the invisible violence that hides under the shared meanings of the social practices of differentiation of the women. If we try to isolate the different typologies of violence from our discourse, we could observe what it is considered as the zero grade of violence, which is constituted by the “normal” rules governing gender relationships, family patterns, gendering access to the resources of time and money. It is in this area that symbolic violence is located, the “normal” gender asymmetry that premises acts of violence. It is “normally” invisible both to the victims and to the perpetrator, but immediately visible to a stranger coming from outside. It is a symbolic and hierarchically organised area because the ones who dominate the discourse, men and women of the countries considered as completely “modern and developed”, tend to present their own normative presumptions as the measure of non-violence and of “normal” relationships between men and women.

Thus the risk of a racialization of the gender-based violence, through the emphasis on “our” rights, is present in the European discourse and in Italy too. For this reason, during the training, we tried to question what we could define the symbolic violence in the field of the meanings and of the practices of the “others-from-us”. During the “Controversial Issue Lab” we discussed about the practices of security in the cities by the point of view of migrant and “native” women, about the veiled body and the exhibition of “aesthetically modified flesh”, arranged and love-based marriages, the positive or negative meaning of female and male honour in family relationships. Some of these issues have been included also in the questionnaire targeting social and health services and associations that work in the territory. These are themes that characterize the Euro-

pean agenda, where distinction between “civil” and “backward”, “modern” and “traditional” seems to re-put various forms of stratification, along the racial and “ethnic” lines, between the Western-Northern world and the “rest”, but also between the North and the South in Europe itself.

Finally we used the concept of “emotional citizenship” to engage ourselves with an appropriate method to the little group which was birthing, but also to engage ourselves with social practices that produce effective citizenship based on relationships among people, who trust each other, and based on “ordinary” or “deep” actions, which construct social ties, partly independent from normative requirements.

“Emotional citizenship” can be considered a concept in tension with “land of strangers”: these are the two poles of the question “how can we live together in spite of assuming different models of common understandings?”

The key-concepts were not proposed as a normative horizon, but submitted to a test of utility especially through the practice of the Laboratory Beads&Words.

## **The Organization and the Steps of the Laboratory**

Creators, leaders and trainers of *SPEAK OUT!* project made periodical meetings to test and improve the development of the project, while a discussion on the general problems emerging in the training was set weekly with participants during lunch break that was in the branch of Sociology of the FISPPA Department.

Coordinator and some of the organizers acted also as trainers. The integration of the project in the everyday context of the Department was possible thanks to the relationship with the Research Group on *Gender, Citizenship, Identities Pluralism* coordinated by the representative of the Applicant as leader for the Project who was also at the time Director of the Ph.D. School on Social Sciences.

The location of Sociology is gorgeous: two buildings of the XVIII century, with a garden, onshore a river, in the inner city of Padua. It provided the adequate place to have seminars and workshops, a Lecture Hall and the auditorium of botanical gardens for the public, or opened to public, meetings, and also an historical theatre in which two theatrical performances were played (Bulaj and Bergamasco).

In the buildings of Sociology it was also possible to enjoy moments of sociality in the garden and creating a space for the prayer for the Muslim women who asked for it.

Women enrolled in the Training for Community Mentor responded to a public call, they were not users of the social services working with victims of violence. They did not arrive to the project *SPEAK OUT!* being victims of gender based violence. However some of them, from the first public meeting, talked about their personal experiences of violence, while others narrated during the

Laboratory, in particular during the story-telling activity, the experiences of violence undergone by themselves or by their neighbour. We can state that the recognition of gender-related violence and the fact of feeling it as something that cannot be endured anymore was the starting point for many participants of *SPEAK OUT!* project. They wanted to empower themselves and act in a territory (Padua and the Veneto region) as if it was one of their homelands: that is to say, they wanted to act as citizens.

In order to explain the practical and organizational dimension of the *SPEAK OUT!* project, in the public call we presented it as a “training path”. Actually *SPEAK OUT!* project was composed by four different Laboratories which shared the same methodology, developed self-consciousness, and recognised each other as women with differences.

## Group Discussions

These discussions opened the Course. They had an informative function on the issues of the rights in the Italian and European context (migration, women’s rights, VAW, asylum,), an introductory function to the activities of the laboratory developed through an self-presentation of the Italian team (organizers, project-makers and trainers) and a presentation of a multicultural story-telling group working in Padua, and a cohesive function of the group itself.

Some of the meetings of the group discussions were partially opened to the public; we sent invitations to institutional representatives (the first meeting), to activists engaged in the struggle against VAW, to local social workers. This partial openness to the public had two main objectives:

- 1) develop the knowledge of the Community Mentor Training and the European project *SPEAK OUT!*;
- 2) propose the creation of a multi-cultural networking against VAW in Padua.

In this phase the team of the Department, the Basaglia Foundation, the Municipality of Padua and the CIRSPG presented their skills and activities in the field of the policies and researches on VAW, in the field of the local policies for migrants and asylum seekers, in the field of policies and researches on gender equal opportunity and gender studies. Moreover, a Public Seminar was organised on November 26<sup>th</sup> 2011 for the International Day on VAW, where a world famous photograph participated.

## The Training Meetings and the Self Help Groups

These activities were organized in four thematic and methodological Laboratories. During the phase of the Training Meetings participants strengthened themselves as a collective group and during the Self Help Groups women experimented several activities: the assembly of their creative writings, the dis-



cussion of the Charter statements, the work at home and the exchange of the provisional texts of short stories by e-mail between them and to the trainers.

The core of this phase, which oriented also the activities of the other three Laboratories, was the Beads&Words Lab for the story-telling and for the *Charter for the Community Mentor*.

Its first objective was to achieve the ability to tell a story and to develop the capacity of writing individual and collective short stories about gender-based violence, risks, occasions and experiences of VAW and positive overcoming of difficulties. The second aim was the production of a public document, which could define the perspective of the Community Mentor in order to synthesize the experience and to propose this figure to the city. The Charter could be also the starting point for a possible NGO proposing the Community Mentor activity in Padua and in the Veneto territory.

The Beads&Words Lab – mainly run by the Basaglia Foundation – based the training on 10 key words (and semantic areas) that guided the other three laboratories. We chose the following key words together:

- 1) Discrimination/Neglected rights
- 2) Fear/ Isolation/Powerlessness
- 3) Boundary/Border
- 4) Mistrust /Resignation/Depression
- 5) Private-Public/Home – Community/Country of residence – Country of origin
- 6) Fight/Movement/ Action/Creativity/Imagination
- 7) Empowerment
- 8) Body/Freedom
- 9) Network/Group/Patterns
- 10) Giving birth

These key words – with some others – allowed the development of a discussion on violence, but also on the personal and collective skills to exit from violence. The exit from violence was metaphorically described as “giving birth”, both in a symbolic and material sense.

The Laboratory on Controversial Issues was assigned to the Department of Sociology with the collaboration of the CIRSPG. This Laboratory aimed at introducing women to confront their differences in a context where cultural pluralism was taken for granted. Nevertheless the cultural differences were discussed in the light of implementing interpersonal relationships in order to achieve women’s empowerment.

It was conceived as a Laboratory on controversial issues that are present in the European and Italian public debate and where the migrant women’s voice is silenced. It runs around some main questions: in the Europe of whiteness, how can we implement recognition and rights for all women, including MRM ones? Which are the meanings of gender, gender inequality, violence, honour? How is

thinking violence in arranged marriages and in love marriages? What is a “safe city” for women and migrant women? What is our point of view on the debates on “too much covered” body and “too much naked” body?

The team of the University of Padua benefited also from a group of young researchers working since long time with migrant women in their personal research project and participating at the research group on “Gendering Migration” in the CIRSPG. These young scholars, together with an intern student and two experts of human rights, had the role of facilitators especially in presenting controversial issues. They are used in their research training to consider the importance of different biographies, experiences and understandings for a positive relationship in asymmetrical situations. It was our worry to prevent ethnocentrism, as well as to avoid of taking for granted a commonality of experiences and point of view just on the basis of being women. The main objectives of the Lab. were the recognition of the reciprocal differences as well as the discovery of common roots of the gender-based violence.

The Laboratory on *Welfare System*, undertook mainly by the Municipality of Padua, promoted a dialogue among professionals and women attending the Training on the resources and services offered by the local welfare system and by the anti-violence Centre. The discussion matched the presentation of working experiences and organization models with the demands of citizenship of migrant women, moreover discussion were oriented to discover reciprocal misunderstandings, on the basis of cultural differences and power relationship.

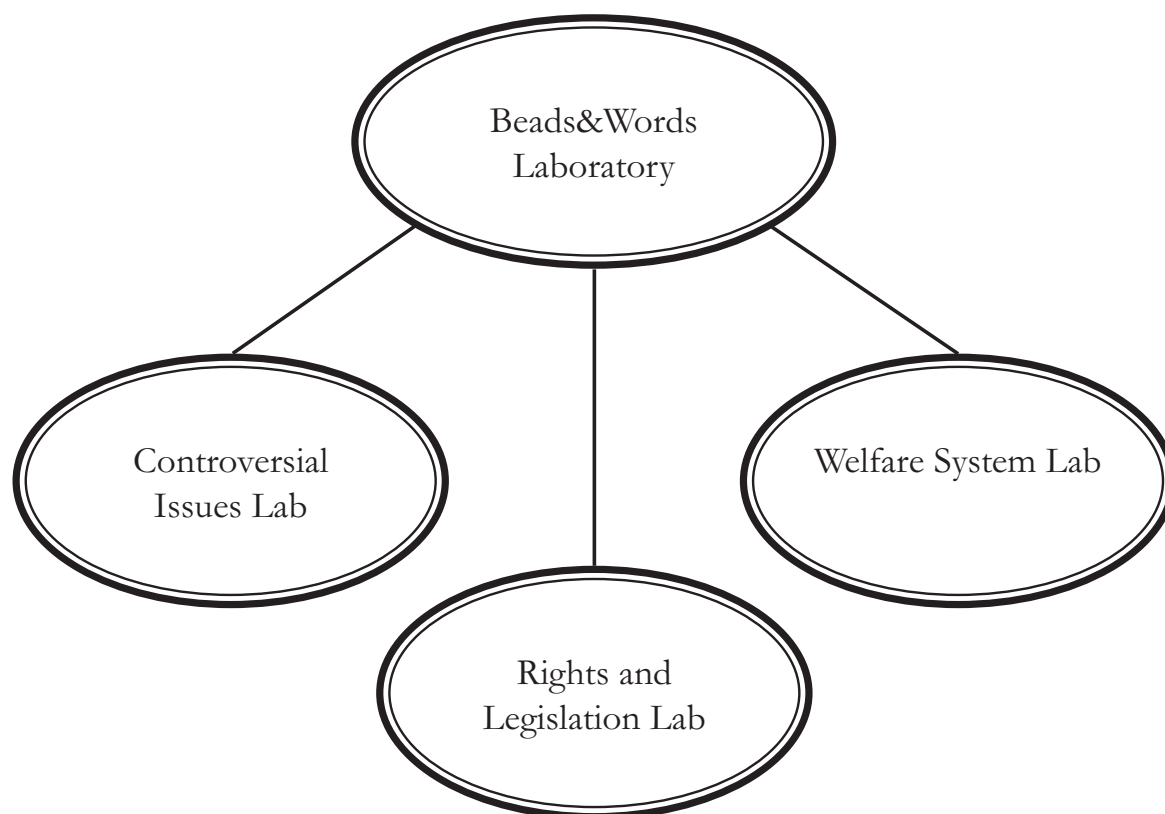
In this part of the laboratory the results of the survey and focus groups on the perception of the VAW and migration issues were also discussed (see Part 1).

The anti-violence Centre was immediately welcomed with empathy by participants to the project while the confrontation with public services were a precious occasion to speak about the local criticalities, the cultural misunderstandings that compromise the fruition of the rights, particularly for migrant women. The different languages and the scarcity of resources were recognised as criticalities by both social workers and migrant women.

The Laboratory *Rights and Legislation Lab* led by three lawyers, who in the Seventies created one of the first groups of feminist jurists in Italy, presented concrete cases of violence on women and migrant women in which it was possible to apply the Italian legislation on VAW, on family and on labour. In this phase the most relevant methodological aspect was the confrontation among rights and differences, while the key words used were related to discrimination, negated rights and possibilities to empowerment.

These Laboratories – *Controversial issues Lab*, *Welfare System Lab*, *Rights and Legislation Lab* – had the function of accompanying the reflection and production of the short stories and of the Charter for the Community Mentor.

The four typologies of Laboratory were oriented to the confrontation of practices, to the recognition of the multiple dimensions of the violence and of the opportunities and the difficulties in dealing with it.



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## 9.2. The Selection of Participants: Group’s Formation and Composition

The Italian team decided to give continuity to the activities of Workstream 2, Workstream 3 and Workstream 4 and to link Group Discussions (workstream 2), Training Meetings (workstream 3) and Self-Help Groups Establishment and Facilitation (workstream 4) under a unique Training with four Laboratories in order to:

- facilitate the solidity of a working group promoting a migrant’s network; implement the local network on VAW;

- legitimate the future migrant women’s mentoring network toward the local institutions, welfare system, migrant’s group, women’s NGO;
- give merit to those attending regularly the meetings.

The name of that path was “Training Course for Community Mentor to prevent and contrast Violence Against Women”. A Mentor is a person who does not look at the other side, does not remain silent, uses her capacities to find an appropriate answer, confidently moves in her community/groups, women’s Ngo and local welfare system context to support another woman. In our perspective, considering women’s needs in our territory, a Community Mentor does not work only with her group of origin. She is a person able to work as a bridge between her everyday contexts and other migrant, refugee, minority groups and native women of different cultural origin, professional women and men working in local welfare system and acting in a women’s friendly way.

We prepared a public call for application available at the University of Padua web page, at the Municipality of Padua web page and in many public offices of the city (see Appendix). The target of the call were migrant women, migrant origin women, refugee women and ethnic minority women, we considered that an affirmative action, in order to accomplish the project aim and to promote and foster the participation of migrant women at the public life of the city. Specific requests and motivations to participate were:

- good knowledge of the Italian language;
- regular attendance;
- openness to experience reflections, approaches, practices oriented to reception and guidance of other women in their different paths in the city;
- sensitivity to VAW related issues and gender approaches;
- interest and curiosity towards the training of new social figures like the community mentor;
- availability to use their life experiences and their story as empowering instruments and resources for other women;
- availability to use some expressive forms of creative art;
- any working or volunteering experiences in public institutes/services or no profit associations.

At the end of the Course a Certificate of attendance was received by participants, who would attend the main part of it. Fifty-eight women asked to take part at the Course. We admitted all applicants; thirty-two people were regularly present. As explained in Part 1, following the focus groups results the Roma women participation was considered as not possible.

Group discussions, training meetings and self-help groups were organized at the University of Padua, “Department of Sociology”, which changed its name on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 into “Philosophy, Sociology, Education and Applied Psychology Department”, on Saturday, from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm.

## Characteristics of Participants (Regularly Present): Countries of Origin

Albania (5 participants), Morocco (4 participants), Romania (4 participants), Somalia (3 participants), Ivory Coast (2 participants), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1 participant), Cameroon (1 participant), Chile (1 participant), Colombia (1 participant), Congo R.D. (1 participant), Croatia (1 participant), Kenya (1 participant), Macedonia (1 participant), Mexico (1 participant), Moldova (1 participant), Peru (1 participant), Rwanda (1 participant), Uruguay (1 participant), Venezuela (1 participant).

## Age

From the age of 20 to 25 years old (4 participants), from 26 to 30 years old (3 participants), from 31 to 35 years old (7 participants), from 36 to 40 years old (7 participants), from 41 to 45 years old (4 participants), from 46 to 50 years old (6 participants), from 51 to 55 years old (1 participant).

## Level of education

High School degree (11 participants), University students (2 participants), University degree (10 participants), Master's degree (5 participants), PhD students (3 participants), PhD degree (1 participant).

## 9.3. Main Issues of the Community Mentor Course

### Group Discussions

#### 10.29.2011:

- Presentation of *SPEAK OUT!* project;
  - Documentary “Bellissime”, by Giovanna Gagliardo on the history of Italian women;
  - Self-presentation of native and migrant women in their experience of the changes in the Italian society
- Enzo Pace (Director of the Department of Sociology – University of Padua)  
Franca Bimbi (University of Padua)  
Antonella Ferrandino (Municipality of Padua)  
Alberta Basaglia (Franca e Franco Basaglia Foundation)  
Alisa Del Re (CIRSPG- University of Padua)  
Milvia Boselli (City Councilor for Equal Opportunities)  
Natalya Lyamkina (Anti-violence centre Modena)  
Josette Saidi (Medical Doctor, Padua)

### 11.12.2011:

- Immigration law in Europe and Italy, Marco Ferrero, University of Venice
- Italian law on VAW and related issues, Milly Virgilio, University of Bologna
- Presentation of aims and methodologies of “Community Mentor’s Course”, Franca Bimbi, Alberta Basaglia

### 11.26.2011:

- Refugee and Asylum seekers legislation, Alessandra Sciorba, Human Rights researcher
- Services to promote integration of migrants and refugees in Padua, Antonella Ferrandino
- Self-presentation of two women refugee in Padua
- The Intern Day on VAW, Notes from a journey in Afghanistan and other countries, Monika Bulaj, photographer

### 12.03.2011:

- Presentation of a multicultural gender/feminist discourse showing an international choice of books, Franca Bimbi
- A story-telling path by a group of native and migrant women in Padua, Introduction by Marisa Martinelli (teacher)
- Self-presentation of women, who take part in the story-telling group

## The Group Discussions Path

The title of the last Public Seminar in June 2012 «*Violence against women. Questions on the others and us*» could be considered as the summary of our working method as we used it since the opening meeting of the Italian *SPEAK OUT!* project in October 2011.

Our work was ideally and practically constructed following a circular model: from the presentation of a critical discourse on a topic on VAW and MRM to some personal experience presented by images (film/theatre performances/pictures) or directly by women, from some concrete cases of good practice to some creative exercise in the classroom. The path aimed at having as a result an interpersonal recognition and, at the same time, tools for the anti-violence agency in the Community Mentor perspective, in this way we could come back and restart the critical discourse on the working progress of each participant.

The Community Mentor was conceived with a perspective of peer-to-peer attitude and practice. As a consequence, creators, as well as leaders, trainers and external experts (if possible) were “obliged” to assume a horizontal posture

when they acted their factual authority. Since the beginning we decided to assume a de-constructive and critical attitude regarding the asymmetrical relationships between “native” and MRM women.

In the first Group Discussion (the opening meeting) took place the presentation of the project and the course and the projection of the documentary “Bellissime”, by Giovanna Gagliardo which deals with the history of Italian women and in particular of feminism, emancipation and social changes of the Italian society since 1900.

Four women of the Italian team and two migrant women (a representative of the Anti-violence Centre of Modena and a medical doctor living in Padua), presented their experience on gender related activities, but also their experience about the social changes in the Italian society. During the presentations some differences emerged that illustrated the pluralism of standpoints and of interpretations of apparently similar experiences. It appeared clear that “feminism”, “emancipation”, “modernization”, “moral attitude”, “VAW”, “family” could have different meanings or similar meanings depending on different situations.

The actual cultural pluralism of the Italian society connected to the “native” women experience was strengthened by the presentation of some migrant women. A woman from the Ivory Coast described the status of women in her country and she explained a particular kind of physical violence perpetrated by husbands, violence agreed by wives’ parents and accepted within the whole community. A participant from Morocco had a thought on another kind of violence: institutional violence, in particularly related to the Italian citizenship law and the violence related to the use of veil. A Romanian participant talked about the discrimination suffered by her community, now Romania is part of the European Union, but they continue to face several difficulties to be integrated in the society and to be considered as European. She reflected also on the role of women as mothers, women can raise their children teaching how they can avoid prejudice and discrimination.

Another participant explained that she has been living in Italy for the past twenty years and she noticed some improvement connected to the acceptance and integration policies, but she also said that Italian society still needs time to overcome its limits and accept a multicultural population. Another participant made some reflections about prejudice and the lack of reciprocal knowledge and information. A woman from Moldova talked about her positive experience of integration. Then she stressed the lack of information related to how women can face violence. She described a story of violence suffered by one of her relatives and she explained that she could not find help. Alberta Basaglia explained how the anti-violence centre could help that woman. She also offered her personal help, if necessary.

At the end speakers and participants talked about the importance to face violence against women as persons, not as officers. When psychologists, doctors, policemen/women get in touch with a woman, who suffered violence, they have



to put their role into bracket, they must offer a personal relationship, then through their role find the appropriate solution.

In the second Group Discussion two experts presented the Italian immigration law and the Italian law on violence against women. Franca Bimbi introduced the meeting talking about a case which permitted participants to understand the importance of women agency and of the personal choice. In 1965, 31 years before the promulgation of the Law on violence against women, Franca Viola, an 18 years old Sicilian girl, refused to marry the man who raped her to force their marriage. At that time (and until 1981) the Italian law admitted the possibility to cancel the crime of rape, if the rapist would marry the raped girl. Moreover, the loss of virginity before marriage for a girl in the 60s, constituted a shame for her and for her family. Franca Viola refused the “shotgun wedding” and the VAW entered in the Italian public agenda.

After this introduction, prof. Marco Ferrero (University Ca’Foscari of Venice) presented the Italian immigration laws, stressing also how the legal language can in some cases hide some kind of prejudice and how some policy contains direct or indirect discrimination. Following Ferrero’s presentation, prof. Milly Virgilio (University of Bologna) a prominent feminist scholar and penal law lawyer had a speech on the Italian law on violence against women explaining also the evolution of Italian law in the field of crimes against women.

She explained the differences between injury, stalking, abuse, offence, crime and she described the answer that law gives to these circumstances. Moreover, she clarifies the prevention measure that the legislator introduced to prevent crimes against women. She explained also very well what a woman, who suffered violence, can do to manage and overcome her difficult situation through legal instruments. After her speech participants began to ask questions and discussed about some aspects of Italian immigration law related to violence against women. A woman from India asked if the deportation rule is valid, even if is directed to a woman, who in her origin country can suffer violence. Another woman asked some clarifications about connection between Italian immigration law and European immigration rules. A participant from Morocco made some questions about residence permit connected with family re-union. Several times women, who arrive in Italy with a family re-union permit, could not be independent because their life in our country is closely connected with the one of their husband. Another participant wanted to know if Italy agrees to renew the residence permit to a migrant man, who perpetrates violence to his wife. At the end a woman asked some clarifications about citizenship connected to migrant minors, who are separated from their families, because their relatives carry out some kind of violence to them. Participants discussed also about violence against women as taboo also for women. Fear, shame, lack of information, lack of money can prevent women from going to an anti-violence centre or denouncing their rapist. After that some participants explained why they decided to attend the “Training for Community Mentor”.

A participant talked about her desire to call into question herself. Another woman told her experience of violence and how she overcame it, now she wants to support other women, who are going through a difficult situation. Another participant, who suffered violence, explained the importance to support women victims of VAW, she considered listening and comprehension fundamental and she explained her point of view about what she called “moral violence”. A woman described her experience as witness of violence, she told the story of her neighbour and how she wanted to help her, but she didn’t know what she could do. She decided to attend the “Training for Community Mentor” to learn how to support women who suffer from violence. Other participants, who work at the public immigration office, affirmed that they decided to attend the Course, because they need a specific training to support migrant women. Often migrant women fell lonely and they don’t know how to face violence situations. Another woman affirmed that she wanted to discuss about different kinds of violence that a woman can suffer. A participant explained the meaning of “Italy syndrome”, that is a sort of psychological damage suffered by migrant women, who leave their country, relatives and children to look for a job in Italy. It is a kind of very dangerous violence.

At the end of the day, participants discussed the importance to call themselves, through the Course, into question.

The third Group Discussion was on legislation and experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in Italy. The trainers were Alessandra Sciorba, a human rights researcher and Antonella Ferrandino, the responsible of the project Unit for Welcoming and Immigration of the Municipality of Padua.

Alessandra Sciorba described the historic evolution of the right of asylum and international and national Charters, which protect refugees and asylum seekers. After that she talked deeply and critically about the European system “Schengen”, the Dublin regulation and she explained very well the principle of “non refoulement” (art. 33 of the Convention relating to the status of refugees). She described deeply the contradictions and the limitations of the Italian legislation and all steps a person has to do to obtain the refugee status.

A participant talked about the institutional violence she had suffered, because several times police men and officers treated her in a very aggressive and arrogant way. Other participants asked some clarifications about Italian law and connections between human rights and family rights.

After that Antonella Ferrandino described services and activities that the Municipality of Padua implemented to promote integration of migrant citizens in the city. She talked about the local “Rondine project”, which is the project that in Padua deals with integration of refugees. She explained all services and activities Rondine project offers to refugees and asylum seekers.

Two refugee women presented their experience. One of them came from Rwanda and arrived in Italy in 1996, she obtained the refugee status and now, after many difficulties, she is an Italian citizen living in Padua. Another woman

from the Ivory Coast spoke about her experience. She arrived in Italy in 2010 and she obtained subsidiary protection. Some participants asked questions about the sort of asylum seekers, who don't obtain refugee status and protection. A participant introduced a reflection about crisis and migration, and how the world economic crisis builds differences between Italians and migrants. Alessandra Sciruba stressed the importance to appeal at the European Human Rights Court, when a person receives a refusal of refugee status and fears to be tortured if goes back to his/her country.

After lunch break we went to the theatre "Teatro Ruzante" to see the performance of Monika Bulaj, a photographer and migrant woman. She showed especially women's and mother-child's images from many parts of the so-called undeveloped world. She communicated the beauty and the uniqueness of every human being but also we could understand how "our" eyes are violent when we looked at the poverty and the misery as opposite to the beauty.

At the fourth Group Discussion Franca Bimbi showed a pile of books to hand over and to browse through. Starting from the feminist seminal handbook "Our bodies for ourselves" by The Boston Women's Health Book Collective, these 16 books deal with gender, women, feminism and violence and cover a period of time of 50 years (from '60 to 2011). Authors are women: Italian, Moroccan, Tunisian, Turkish, Brazilian, and American. A man's book (by Nuto Revelli) on the oral history of the Italian women during the Second World War and a woman's book (by Kim Ragusa) on the Italo-American women's *memoirs* were chosen to present different types of story-telling and to introduce the experience of a local group on it: the "group of Guizza" (Guizza is a quarter of Padua), a group of women who meet weekly in a room of the city district since five years. They are migrant and native women, they talked about themselves, about their problems, they help each other or simply they have a cup of tea together. They decided to record their meetings with their life stories to publish them. It's the first time that a group of native and migrant women constitute a group of story-telling in Padua. Five women told us their experience as migrant, as women and as part of the group. After listening, some other attendees decided to talk about their experience. One of them who came from Kenya and who has been living in Italy for the past three years told us that she would like to go back to her country and to help people that suffer difficulties and violence. Another participant with Indian origin reflected about some Indian women writers born in Western countries, who now are going back to India to write their books. She reflected on the desire to come back to the origins, but she noticed that even if they look for their roots, their point of view is a western point of view and their perspective does not reflect the real native perspective. After that, we talked about transculturation, which indicates the risk and the opportunity of a reciprocal "contamination".

At the end of Groups Discussions we found that more than thirty women were remained for walking along the whole Community Mentor path.

## Training Meetings and Self-Help Groups: Laboratories

### 01.28.2012:

- Controversial Issues Lab. “Violence as gender inequality in a globalized world”, Franca Bimbi
- Controversial Issues Lab.” VAW: Invisible, visible and measurable,” Franca Bimbi
- Controversial Issues Lab. “Honour crimes: in the European and Italian debate”, Giulia D’Odorico

### 02.04.2012:

- Controversial Issues Lab. “Violence in a city friendly with women”, Francesca A. Vianello
- Controversial Issues Lab. “Media in the Europe of rights and of “whiteness””, Angela M. Toffanin

### 02.18.2012:

- Beads&Words Laboratory: introduction by Sara Cavallaro (psychologist and trainer of the laboratory) and Alberta Basaglia.
- Welfare System Lab. Meeting with social and health services and the city’s NGO.

### 02.25.2012

- Beads&Words Laboratory, Sara Cavallaro
- Welfare System Lab. Meeting with social and health services and the city’s NGO.

### 03.10.2012:

- Beads&Words Laboratory, Sara Cavallaro. Introduction on the elaboration of “their” stories by Giulietta Raccanelli (journalist)
- Rights and Legislation Lab. “VAW and stalking in intimate relationships”, Annamaria Marin (lawyer)

### 03.24.2012:

- Beads&Words Laboratory, Sara Cavallaro
- Rights and Legislation Lab. “Italian Family’s law”, Francesca Maggiolo (lawyer)

### 04.14.2012:

- Beads&Words Laboratory: self-help on stories elaboration and the Charter preparation, Sara Cavallaro&Giulietta Raccanelli
- Rights and Legislation Lab. “Italian work’s law”, Chiara Santi (lawyer)

Participants asked for an extra-meeting, on 05.26.2012. On that day they read the definitive version of the “Charter for Community Mentor on violence against women” and they read their stories, products of the story-telling path.

#### **04.28.2012:**

- Beads&Words Laboratory: self-help on stories elaboration and the Charter preparation, Sara Cavallaro&Giulietta Raccanelli
- Results from the questionnaire of Workstream 1, Paolo Gusmeroli

#### **05.12.2012:**

- Beads&Words Laboratory: self-help on stories elaboration and the Charter discussion, Sara Cavallaro and Giulietta Raccanelli
- Beads&Words Laboratory “Differences to give birth in the past and nowadays, and differences to give birth in different countries”, Maria Biagini (obstetrician)

### **9.4. From Telling to Writing. Preparatory Activities and Outputs of the Beads&Words Laboratory**

The Beads&Words Laboratory was the centre of the Community Mentor Course activities and its focus was related to the others three Laboratories on Controversial Issues, Rights and Legislation, Welfare System.

The whole Training Course was filmed and two assistants worked in shift at the recording. They were also members of the team and they worked at the project since its beginning for different activities such as focus groups and the questionnaire with different tasks in the organization. During the Beads&Words Laboratory only assistants, being silent, could stay with trainers in the room where the activities took place. The assistants were also charged of the writing of some parts of the reports.

#### **The outputs of Beads&Words Laboratory**

The outputs of Beads&Words Laboratory were:

- 11 short-stories written by participants;
- 1 analysis of contents of one short-story written by its authors;
- 5 writings concerning issues discussed in the Laboratories.
- the *Charter for the Community Mentor against Violence on Women*

Moreover, one participant wrote an “evaluation story” about the whole Community Mentor Course.

Short-stories and writings were written individually or collective during the meetings and partly at home, furthermore we received two of them some weeks later the end of the Course.

The short stories were one of the most important markers of the group integration, because of the intercultural exchange, the recognition of VAW and the

attitudes to face it. Considering this centrality some members of the team had the participants' consensus to watch and then discuss the recordings in order to work at the report. As a consequence not only the Laboratory's trainers and assistants, but also the external evaluator, two of the team leaders, and an anthropologist who participated to some activities of the project, could access to this material and could contribute to the report from different standpoints.

Before the beginning of the Beads&Words Laboratory we organized some preparatory activities in order to favor the development of the Lab and the implementation of the Self Help Groups phase where the short stories and the Charter were produced.

During a Group Discussions meeting participants met a story-telling group who is active in the city of Padua; this allowed them to know and understand the organization and the activities of this kind of group.

The creation of the Charter was the direct effect of the substantial rejection by participants of the *Charter on the everyday life practices for Gender Human Rights* produced with the collaboration of the Italian team leaders in 2010 for an Anti-Violence Training Course in the Veneto territory.

During *Controversial Issues Lab* participants were invited to write down their reflections about the issues discussed at home, this technique introduced them practically to a story-telling path.

For example after the meeting on violence suffered by women in the public spaces and the places where women could feel themselves "at home" or feel themselves strangers, some participants decided to send us some of their reflections via e-mail.

*T: My history in Italy began two years ago in a small village, where everybody knew each other. I lived with my brother and my mom, but I felt lonely ... When I moved to Padua I began to feel happiness ... Now I can affirm that in Padua I feel at home, I have my personal doctor, my hairdresser, when I go at the supermarket the shop-assistant knows me. I obtained it with many efforts, but now I'm happy.*

*Y: In my opinion feeling at home depends on the kind of relationship I'm able to build in this country or place. For example if I say that I feel myself at home during the Community Mentor Course it means that I feel it is a place where I can develop my capabilities without perceiving prejudices.*

*Y: I feel good where I live, in my building we are 11 families, the majority kind and we have good relationships. Sometimes we drink tea or coffee or we celebrate birthdays together. Last year we had a dinner all together and 6 families participated. But I don't feel myself at home here, here it's different.*

Through the vision of some films or parts of them during Beads&Words Lab participants were invited to reflect on some key-words related to violence against women. After the visions they were divided into groups and each group was supposed to analyse a couple of words. At the end of this work each group

described to the rest of participants their analysis and reflections, in this way everybody could add or specify their point of view.

This way of working (repeated for three times) allowed participants to engage violence against women issues with other women, to discuss their point of view and, in many cases, to talk about their own experience. Images and words were transformed in women's "flesh and blood" through their life experiences.

In this way, women with different nationalities, races, ages, level of education, cultural background weaved a new network. The possibility to talk about themselves and their experience allowed participants to establish bonds of affinity and intimacy. The recognition of their similarity, despite their differences, was the first step in the direction of the community mentor perspective.

The first meeting with the story-telling trainer (Giulietta Raccanelli) permitted participants to approach the technical tools (different kinds of creative writing) to translate their oral reflections and biographical experiences in written texts.

Writing became a consequence of the discussions of the previous "verbal" meetings.

Writing a story or their own story allowed attendees to adopt also an external and critical eye on their personal experiences of violence.

The step from a public, but intimate display to a written text could increase the awareness of participants' experience as women and as migrant women, who act in the conflicting field of gender relationships. In this process they confronted themselves with other women on the ground of a special reflexive experience; they could also understand how expertise of other women (trainers, experts, university professors) matched their needs and expectations.

During the story-telling path some women decided to work in groups, others preferred to work alone and others preferred to work in group during the meetings and then to work alone at home.

Some of the participants decided to work in group when they felt that the bonds of intimacy between them were established and they could feel ready for the realization of collective short-stories. Each group was born spontaneously and in each group there were participants with different characteristics: different ages, nationalities, professions.

Attendees could work together during the meetings, in each group there was someone who took notes. Some of them decided to continue the work at home through an intense exchange of e-mails between them and between them and the trainer.

At the end of the story-telling path 9 short-stories were written, but we received two more after the end of the Laboratory, so totally we had 11 short-stories. Four short-stories are written collectively, seven are written individually (two during the meeting, five at home). Some authors wanted to use their real name, others preferred to use a pen name.

The following presentation of the summary of short stories could be useful as introduction to the Laboratory results, especially for understanding the cultural pluralism on the interpretation of violence and the way to overcome it considered by migrant women attending the Course.

### **Summary of the short stories**

#### *Albe nuove* (A new dawn)

“Albe nuove” is a fantasy story based on the biography of two participants. It is set in a train station and protagonists are two women, one from Argentina and one from central Africa. The two women never talk together, but through their glances they communicate. Both are migrants, both had a heavy background of violence. Both are full of hope and believe in a better future.

#### *I nostri dodici piedi* (Our twelve feet)

“I nostri dodici piedi” is a transcription of a dialogue between some participants of the Course. “I nostri dodici piedi” deal with feet. Participants decided to analyze this body part, as during the Course they reflected to the importance to use all body parts to support a woman, who is suffering violence. It’s a dialogue/tale that told us about the life story of participants and how feet have been important to face difficulties and to go on.

#### *Il Segreto* (The secret)

“Il segreto” is about a story of violence and a secret. A woman told to the writer that she was victim of a rape from a member of the family, but she could not denounce him, because “the family rules” did not allow it. She kept all this time the secret, but now she needs to talk to somebody. The woman asked to the writer to reveal the truth to the whole family, when she’ll die.

#### *Il treno del tempo sospeso* (The train of the suspended time)

“Il treno del tempo sospeso” is a fantasy story based on the biography of participants. It’s about a train trip and the story of 5 women. During the trip a snowstorm slows the train down and women began to talk about their lives and their experiences. They talked about their migration project, their violence experiences, the difficulties they met and the help they found.

#### *Manuela* (Manuela)

“Manuela” is a biography. It’s the story of a girl, who leaves her country and comes to Italy. She studies, but she has also to work to be independent. She discovers the difficulties to be a migrant, the difficulties to understand a different culture, the difficulties of everyday life like renting a house or harriving up with bureaucracy.



### *Scene da un matrimonio africano* (African Marriage)

“Scene da un matrimonio africano” is set in a country in Central Africa. It’s the story of an infidelity, but also of the loneliness suffered by women in a rich and “modern” African family and on the influence of prejudices on women’s honour and shame. The protagonist discovered the adultery and tried to talk with her husband, who refused her requested and suggested her to find a lover. The woman is destroyed and didn’t know what she has to do. Should she leave her husband? And what should she do with their children? In her environment is considered acceptable that a woman suffers infidelities and other kinds of violence from her husband. Moreover if she leaves him, it will be her fault. She won’t find the force to escape from that situation.

### *Ossessiva presenza* (Obsessive presence)

“Ossessiva presenza” is a theatrical script on violence and on stalking trough the web. It is the story of a woman, who discovers that her ex-boyfriend had created a blog about her and their relationship. She suffered violence by that man, but she had the force to close the relationship. Now she realizes she is living again violence from him. She decided to switch off the laptop. This act has a metaphorical sense: close definitively that chapter and go on with her life.

### *Questione di pancia* (Belly issue)

In “Questione di pancia” a group of participants decided to analyse the belly. Each woman expressed her interpretation of belly. Belly has many meanings. From the belly you give birth. If you are hungry you feel it in your belly. When you’re in love you feel butterflies in your belly. Emotions pass through belly. When you want to understand a person, who is suffering, you must feel with your belly before than with your brain.

### *Un aereo per Julie* (An airplane for Julie)

“Un aereo per Julie” deals with a little girl, who is waiting for the daily bread ration. In her village the bakery’s oven is broken, so she and other many people waited the bread, which should arrive from a near village. She waited all day long, she is hungry and exhausted; finally at sunset time bread arrived. People pushed her, everybody desire bread. She managed to take bread and she could return home. Going home she noticed a neon sign on the top of a building, where it is written: “The Rumanian socialist party protects you”.

*La forza di Zika; la forza delle donne, delle madri, delle figlie, delle mogli, delle sorelle, delle amiche ...* (The strength of Zika; The strength of women, of mothers, of daughters, of wives, of sisters, of friends...)

In this tale the dialogue between two “modern” women seems to tell about the possibility to escape from symbolic violence related to the roles that women have to play daily in a traditional Albanian context. Women as mothers, daugh-

ters, wives, sisters, friends embody “the genetic capacity to sacrifice themselves for the others” unless the moment they decided to stop and say “I do not care of it”. The author uses the story of her great grandmother as an example. That woman was full of strength and she fought for the respect and the empowerment of women in her traditional village.

#### *Il cerchio della violenza* (The circle of violence)

In this story the author talks about the experience of an immigrant woman, who has to renew her documents to stay and work in Italy. The author plays the role of the public officer, who gives information and suggestions to prepare what is required from the Italian legislation to obtain or renew the permit of stay. This short story deals with the implicit and explicit institutional violence suffered by migrants.

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## 9.5. Inside the Beads&Words Laboratory: Gender at Work through Subjectivity, Diversity and Relationship

### Intersecting Migration Experiences and Reflection on Violence within Oral and Written Dialogues

Challenging our mind frames has been a must, because of the specific nature of the whole project. It was a must to recognize the social need to address differently gender-based violence. Participants' migratory experience, but also the label of "migrant" printed on their individuality gave us the opportunity to experience a new way of building practices to tackle violence.

One more reason to put at the core of the work participants' subjectivities. The elaboration of their experiences gave rise to stories that, turned into manuscripts, became tales. These narratives were useful resources to give meaning to the mentorship path. We started with a group of women who questioned themselves on the key elements facilitating the construction of a shared discourse on gender violence. Among them there were also a psychologist and a journalist. What is better than a set of key words to trigger thoughts and responses in this area? We chose a simple list that included places, attitudes, interpretations, stereotypes, feelings, contamination: a mosaic of everyday life that had the task to give rise among the participants' different thoughts and points of view.

Subjectivities and origin cultural contexts emerged very quickly. Thus, under the stimulus of the some movies images, books, and photographs, we began to outline an elaboration tool that was shared and participated and essential for the workshop. Thoughts, experiences, opinions, incomplete creative freedom, came to be part of the transformation process from the oral to the written story. First the reflection, then the memory, then the text: passages that allowed us to specify and define all of the previous work. A collective work, elaborated starting from oneself. It could bring out differences but also similarities with regards to violence against women. It was a mixed working method aimed at allowing the interplay of ideas and thoughts through the intersection of experienced activities, sometimes collectively, sometimes in small groups, others alone. During meetings, thoughts, fragments, texts were exchanged via email among people who had never seen each other before. From here we arrived to the final stage with in an easy way. It was the collective creation of the Charter for *Community Mentor against Violence on Women*, summarizing in ten points the definition of possible strategies to fight gender-based violence.

Participants learned in a very short time to talk to each other, with trust, in writing, face-to-face and by email. This attitude gave rise to a shared awareness on the suggestion to give to public action, through the Charter. The comparison with similar documents already in use was first started and then set aside in order to create their own model, based on the relationships created during the workshop. In this way, every woman could keep some useful "work tools" to use when, as "community Mentor", will help other women through freedom paths.

A set of self-defined rules able to transform individual subjectivities into a relational capacity in order to “help” and “care”. The workshop allowed to pack a suit, that of the Mentor, which contains dresses made up of many colours, a patchwork of diversities that can cohabit. A palette of colours from which every woman can choose her own colours to paint her way out of violence. The attitude of continuous discussion on ourselves and of keywords related to our experience with other people becomes the mentor’s “soul”.

### **Magnifying Glass on the Laboratory. Genetic and Constructive Aspects on Bodies, Languages and Difference**

A challenge: to try to find out, together with a group of women with a migratory story, new ways to interpret and fight gender-based violence. The women’s “migrant” side was a resource to re-discuss how to stand next to a battered woman. Furthermore, we decided to experience this comparison in a neutral place: a classroom. It was a space in which all the participants could feel equally at stake: native Italians, native Mexicans, native Kenyans, native Macedonians etc., women of many different countries. At the time of the admission selection, we requested a good knowledge of the Italian language, in order to have a shared communication code. However, in the most excited and creative moment of the workshop, this homologation instrument was corruptible. It often turns into a *mestizo* and contaminated language. A language made up of many different words, able to render perfectly the gender violence meanings. “Beads&Words”. Words like precious pearls and beads found by-case, with which we constructed jewels of words. Jewels that made us sensible and intelligible to each other. A necessary tie between emotional and reasonableness aspects to give shape to relationships. Giving names in order to emphasize the value and importance of the process that from the word itself leads to the subjective perception of its meaning. Every interpretation tells a person’s story and

shows a possible way to observe the reality. It is not a coincidence that we chose to define some key words in order to talk together about gender violence and outline strategies to fight it. However, the starting point was the mentor’s body, physically present in the classroom and also as a silhouette drawn by the participants. It was their body silhouette. And the body, with all its physical, emotional and psychological load became the first useful tool to start working on the definition of “mentor”.



Working with victims of gender based violence also means to use their stories and our own stories, not only drawing on techniques and knowledge already known. It means identifying the body centrality as a valuable tool of closeness to a woman who suffers or has suffered violence. But it also means recognizing the vulnerability of women's body that is always at risk of discrimination and abuse. The main objective – of the workshop and of the mentor – will be to transform every single woman fragility into subjective and collective power.

That is why the participants' silhouettes, drawn on a large sheet of paper, was hanging in the classroom for the all workshop duration: because in order to become a mentor it is impossible to forget the story and the body of each one and from its component parts: the head, heart, hands, feet, stomach, eyes, ears, mouth. Everyone is there for a reason: to represent a different way to interpret violence.

Some exercises on body perception and awareness, like walking in the garden near the classroom, were a necessary input: from the weight exerted by the foot on the ground to the hands intertwined with other hands. These experiences were reported, even unconsciously, in the subsequent work of writing that was concluded with the elaboration of twelve stories.

### **Key-Words as Evocative Spaces of Gender-Based Violence and of Women's Strength. The original Key-words**

- 1) Discrimination/Neglected rights
- 2) Fear/Isolation/Powerlessness
- 3) Boundary/Border
- 4) Mistrust/Resignation/Depression
- 5) Private-Public/Home – Community/Country of residence – Country of origin
- 6) Fight/Movement/ Action/Creativity/Imagination
- 7) Empowerment
- 8) Body/Freedom
- 9) Network/Group/Patterns
- 10) Giving birth

During the Lab some key-words were added or they found a better definition following the discussion:

- *Power/ strength* were added to *empowerment*;
- *Generations* emerged as a word presents in migration stories;
- *Pain* emerged many times as a necessary word;
- *Our patterns* was the explication of some groups' differences;
- *Empathy/ welcome/ closeness* were considered as important feelings to develop the group as well as the mentorship.

All terms could be referred to gender-based violence as lived experiences, cultural stereotypes, interpretations, emotions, meanings. Some, in a first interpretation, seem to be the most compelling, while others, although they could seem more distant because they are more related to “normality”, quickly fit into the context.

Each seems to be able to evoke the places where violence occurs as places that can generate “fear”, “isolation”, the ideas of “border” and “limit”: health care environments, in particular the ones specifically addressed to women (from family planning clinics to gynaecological departments and delivery room); the workplace; the school; the religious circles; spaces related to urban architecture (tunnels, subways, train stations, streets, parks and parking lots), the most intimate places (house, kitchen, bathroom, bed). Through the evocation of these terms they want to build a new relationship among meanings, providing visibility to shared interpretations of gender violence. In this way, another important mentor’s tool takes place: the word. The word becomes the instrument as well as the means to recognize personal dynamics in others’ stories. With these assumptions it is possible to find an approach to violence that has to do with the self, with its own history and its own culture.

It was necessary to reflect on some words before others, starting from the body and arriving to what the Mentor’s body can do for the other. Each word inserted into the story of each training participant has always a different meaning. Recognizing these different nuances led to imagine the multiplicity of perceptions that women, not just those who are victims of violence, can have. In addition to differences, there are also many similarities: feeling vulnerable, for example, becomes a force that unifies and makes it possible to work together.

“Discrimination” is the term the most easily associated to violence, as well as “body” and “fear.” “Network” and “models” apparently do not have anything in common with these issues, but they can be a pretext to reflect on the phenomenology and the strategies to combat violence against women: since they experience discrimination and fear personally, they learn to recognize discrimination and violence on the body of another person, in this case of a battered woman. The term “network” is central, first of all, in the relationship between knowledge and abilities that are closer to violence and then, in the relationships among women. Networking among various disciplines as well as various professionals corresponds to an approach to violence shared and not defined a priori.

At the same time it means recognizing the network as a useful tool for women to come out the “isolation” (another keyword) and the shame of being victim, maltreated. Interweaving friendships and social ties helps to create a culture that brings out a problem and solve it before it is too late.

Also the association of words like “Fight/movement/action/creativity/imagination” has facilitated the original understanding of each term, in order to translate the meaning in everyday life. A personal everyday life that can also result in a collective action.

“Private-public/home-community/country of residence/country of origin”: this is another association, for an important and valuable phase of the workshop which was the prelude to the writing workshop, storytelling, in which they pass from the word to its elaboration and then to a written story. Hence the importance of a stimulus to retrace places of origin, travel, migration, returns, and places of arrival. It was also a stimulus to bring out tactile and olfactory memories as well as child sensations and family and emotional ties. The work was conducted in small groups, an opportunity to get in touch with the history of each person, without avoiding the cruelty of the stories. From the beginning this was an activity of self-help necessary to switch from the individual to a plural perception, from subjective to collective sharing. Private becomes public, becoming a resource and a working tool. “Empowerment” in the aseptic definition of the vocabulary is conceived as the set of knowledge, skills and relational skills that allow an individual or a group to set goals and develop strategies to achieve them by the existing resources. It indicates both a concept and a process that enables to achieve the goals, and is based on two main elements: the feeling of being able to take effective actions to achieve them and the ability to perceive the influence of their own actions on events. “Empowerment” in the history of the women’s movement has also meant the recognition of the rights through the recognition of the value of differences. Analysing the meaning of this term has reinforced the idea that the ability to calibrate the daily choices is based on the knowledge of its strength. Recognizing their own strength also means recognizing their limits. Empowerment is a tool elaborated by women who can be the protagonists of their own choices. In the discussion, the term “Empowerment” has been defined as “the ability to change violent things”.

Discussing the different meanings contained in the keywords also allowed us to analyse how the interpretation of many of them is common and usually stereotypical. The most striking proof was the word “freedom”, which raises and has given rise to an endless succession of sensations, from the most ordinary to the most ancestral. Starting from the initial rejection and distrust in tackling a subject so abused and yet so deep, we came to an interesting and complex debate, enriched by free associations. The term has been changing depending on the eye who watches it and the sentiment under the explication. Different cultural approaches gave to “freedom” a different meaning, beyond the common sense that was apparently the same for all: “Only a free life is a real life.” This word has been confirmed as the most comprehensive, almost the most polyglot; more central and emblematic than how it had seemed at first glance.

The last key word is a verb, “to give birth”. An act universally recognized because it seems just “natural”, and is reserved only to women. However it is always a territory ruled by male medical knowledge. Hence, the debate on the tight relationship between women’s health and institutions taking care of them (hospitals, maternity clinics, family planning clinics). We discussed the excessive medicalization of childbirth and western birth, of how much the institutions can be

violent if they are not able to give recognition to the choices and feelings of women, of which are the limitations on women's freedom to choose how and where to give birth. So the stories of all parts intertwined, giving rise to a single story of *mestizo* births.

The work on Beads&Words indicates that the mentor should train themselves not to take anything granted, to find herself in the other, to recognize violence, accept its consequences, to read the suffering and not to be afraid. The Laboratory has also highlighted the futility of using theories and techniques, like screens: not even adding "gender" or "gender sensitive" eliminates the risk of using power relations in order to reproduce the violence we are fighting. In addition, the multifaceted group made it clear that, in the process of reflection through the key words, there is not only one way to combat violence: every woman is different and has a history. This is why every woman deserves a personalized path, a close-fitting form, where form means "body and subject."

In the laboratory the positive tension among individual story, reflexive reworking and narrative creation has allowed us to put the words, like pearls of a necklace, in the individual and collective writing of short stories, autobiographical and invented at the same time, which were the antecedent of the Charter: a shift from the personal to the political, from the small group to the hypothesis of building together opportunities for agency in the public domain.

In sum, we can affirm that the Laboratory was developed following a circular path: from the word of the trainer or from an image or a film to the work on the Key-words, from the key-words debated in small groups to the confrontation with all participants and then again from the key-words to the individually or collective writing which was discussed by the group and through the group to the definition to the Community Mentor profile.

### **Some Crucial Aspects of the Laboratory Path**

From individually reflection about key-words to the formation of heterogeneous groups (4 groups with 5-6 people each).

In the small group participants discussed about their own reflections, in order to find a common meaning about key-words. Each group worked on two different key-words.

Participants discussed all together about the role of the Mentor considering the key-word and how this could be related to a woman, who suffered violence.

A silhouette of a Mentor was drawn during a meeting and her body was filled of contents during the following meetings.

"And now we can write". Participants were invited to write a short story, a novel, a script etc. real or invented, with the support of an expert in communication.



## 9.6. Inside the Beads&Words Laboratory: The Creation of “Her” Stories around VAW and Gender Empowerment

### **Towards the Storytelling process as Autobiographic and Creative Activity**

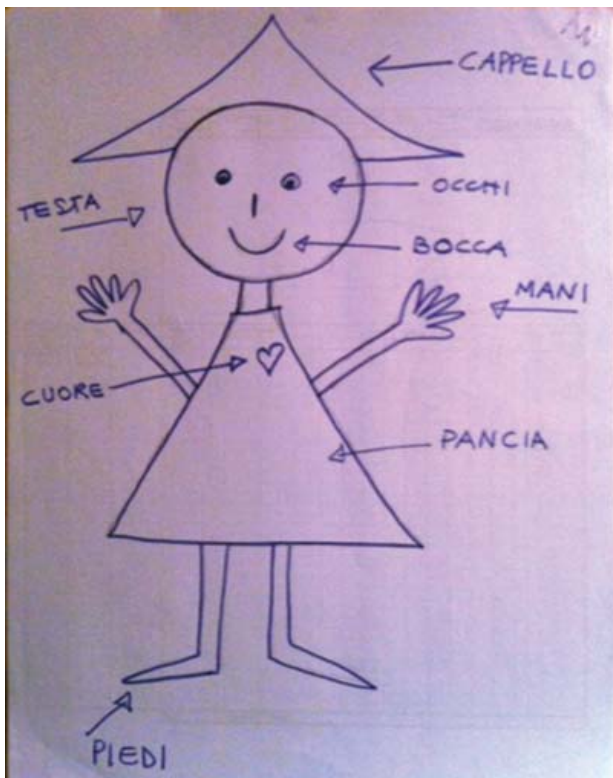
From spoken to written words, by using the Italian language that for many participants is not their mother tongue, but an acquired language. Italian is a language necessarily fluid and full of contamination, an indispensable and valuable tool to encourage an open mestizo and “transcultural” communication. But also it is an instrument imposed by the institutional formation of the Group. The written accounts contributed to focus objectives and intents to recognize and fight gender-based violence. The stories could become tools for that purpose. We were aware that participants’ different origins, age and level of education would have enriched the content of this narration with unexpected contents. Every stimulating and intriguing unpredictability, characterizing both the collective and individual stories. Mutual reading ensured a connection, that was very important for the group. The following notes can be useful to understand the working methods: the continuous comparison/exchange that characterized the whole route and the relationship established with and among participants, based on trust.

In the first phase of the workshop, it was necessary to make a “creative” shift aimed at arriving to the real writing. The intent was clear: the jump should not mean a loss of voices and thoughts. Therefore, Italian became a friendly means to express ideas and stories. Any voice should be penalized in the transition to Italian writing. The hybrid language that the classroom-laboratory created was respected and maintained. No style taboo in dealing with the writing process, no fear of “mistakes”. We have to understand the reason not pertaining to Italian language. The only restriction was clarity of thought. And no red pencil was allowed to underline the inevitable mistakes, typos, the inevitable darkness. Only a shared reasoning, step by step, also via e-mail, on how to get to the point: a finalized story understandable by everyone.

The first type of awareness on which was necessary to reflect was: in the written narrative gesture an indelible political difference is inevitable; on paper identities can survive while otherwise they would be submerged, condemned to oblivion. Women’s writing is full of a strong presence: it is an active presence, that can talk about itself and can embody the power of resistance and denunciation. It is capable of going beyond the ethereal or treacherous sublimation in which the female body has always been forced, under the weight of so much literature that has had it as a protagonist (from the angel-woman to woman-witch). That is the power of writing, to keep basic thinking towards the textual creation. It is no coincidence if the first hard reading was a text from the “One Thousand and One Nights”. The tale of the tales, evocative of the narrator’s – Shahrazad – story-telling art that saved her. Her weapon was the speech, and she managed to win her own and others’ death.

The second awareness was that writing lends itself to be framed within many styles: the poetry, the novel, the fairy tale, the biography, the autobiography, the fantasy, the news story, the film theatre...To each their own. The freedom of choice was another essential point of our working approach: giving women different communicative ways that are all equally viable. The goal was only one: giving voice to the stories, fixing them on paper, in order to make them evidences and instruments in the hands of the mentor. A multicultural periscope that can make many different forms and shades within the fight against gender violence understandable. Hence the need to add adding different texts: a practical example of many forms of writing and styles, but also of the evocative power of the written word.

We read the Bluebeard tale, characterized by the words simplicity designed for children, so full of suspense and anticipation. The direct, clear and concise story of Anna Rosa Nannetti in her essay "1944, from the dark, the light," that gives voice to survivors (many victims' mothers, wives, daughters and sisters) of the Nazi massacres of Grizzana, Marzabotto and Monzuno. A newspaper article that in just thirty lines describes the chronicle of the killing of many women in an Italian province. Lastly, the violation of women's bodies is powerfully evoked in the novel "Beloved" by Toni Morrison: Seth, the protagonist, brings on her scratched back the history of slavery of her people. A tree created by her master's lashes. The power of a symbol (here not written but incised), which speaks of a female body, a body that has been punished but that is capable of rebellion. A woman who dared to denounce sexual violence committed by the white man. Any other viaticum seemed better than this to start writing.



## The Writing

Starting from the body to find jumble experiences and to transform them into bricks, tiles to be recombined in fantasy, but also in the personal or known reality. The objective was to build the mentor's profile with stories that spoke on behalf of her mouth, her eyes, her ears, her stomach, her belly, her feet. These stories, like the pieces of a great Jigsaw, helped completing the whole picture. The shape, outlined on a big white sheet

Figure 15:  
The character and collective creativity from "her" personal writings on the bodily experiences

of paper, of one participant's body was there to remind us this need: the stories belonged to that body. Indeed, as they were written, they were also glued on the silhouette.

Mentors, as Sharhazade, have been able to tell, and then write a lot, often spontaneously, without thinking too much about it, without too many intermediations. As if there was a silent but imminent need to give an identity to events, thoughts, memories which have been buried for a long time, as if there was an urgent need to recognize them in the storytelling act. There was also an urgent need to compose the stories that were chopped up in little pieces. It was like weaving a carpet, but the plot was not fixed on a warp, but on a sheet of paper.

## Mouth

The mouth to breathe and to eat. The mouth to speak. The speech to reveal secrets. The secret. A mouth that speaks after years of silence and submission. And finds a listening ear.

*One day she asked her to listen: You are going to become the keeper of a secret; the day when I'm gone you'll have to disclose it, to your husband and to his brothers. Thus everybody in the family will know it.*

*The girl does not want to hear. But she knows that she cannot hang back; she decided to accept this burden and responsibility. The woman is like a flooded river and the riverbank does not hold it anymore. After years of silence, the words she speaks come from the heart, unhinge the secret and speak.*

*I was twelve years old when your husband's uncle raped me. I was taken to the hospital, but nothing was reported, at that time it was not common. 40 years have passed since that day. And I have obeyed. I have never spoken until now.*

*(What to say to her? Just hugging her? Just looking at her? The girl does not understand how the woman was able to stay silent so long. She thinks that secrets weigh too much and that in her place she would not obey, she would have denounced and shouted to the street all that pain.*

*Now the girl knows. This story became her as well.)*

(From "The Secret")

## Eyes

A story. Two women, two intertwined looks in a station's waiting room. The looks are mutual. Each one imagines the other's story. These eyes and thoughts meeting help both to find the courage to start living again, to go beyond the suffered violence.

*Gisela looked up at the sky, over the shelter roof, in order to meet a point to force back the tears, and for a moment she was delighted: she saw the pink of Argentine sunsets, the gray of the monotony of her Italian existence the white whiteness of her*

*childhood, the red squeezed affections, the black of the abyss from which she had just escaped. “My life has the sky colours,” Gisela thought “and the magic light of this dawn will be my light.” In the hall, the big clock pointed 5.35: it was too early to call Fernanda and ask her hospitality for a few days, until her husband Matteo’s arrival from Madrid. She would wait at least until 7 o’clock; surely her teacher would be awake at that time to take her children to school. Gisela looked around: both station internal and external bars were still closed, so she shuffled to the waiting room. Inside an African woman, wrapped in towel and lying on a row of chairs, was dozing. Gisela wondered if she had spent the night there alone. It did not seem a travelling woman, because she had no luggage with her, with the exception of an outworn purse, she was using as a pillow. She looked at her very well, trying to guess her origin. She was a tall and strong woman, with a beautiful ebony skin and a short and well cared haircut. “Surely she comes from Central Africa”, Gisela thought “a foreigner like me, trying to find a shelter and the light of a new dawn like me”.*

(From “A new dawn”)

## Ears

Ears to listen other people’ stories. A group of women taking advantage of the suspended time given by a train unexpectedly blocked by the snow. Minutes, hours to listen to other travellers that the randomness of life led in that train. A device that allowed a shared re-construction of many stories, of many different lives. Many women who decide to confide in strangers. It was almost the symbolic representation of the situation experienced by participants in their mestizo classroom, during the whole workshop. It is the longest story. Its length is necessary in order to show that it is possible to combine different narrative pieces. One woman becomes narrator, calling the story shots.

*We could get angry like many people around us, they were so furious, telephoning home or at work to advise of the situation and rail against fate, against time and against Italian railways. But we looked at us and we realized that we could afford the luxury of not worrying about the time passing. We were quiet and without any pending commitments for the next few hours. Thus, we chose a different route, we decided to take advantage of what was happening to know each other and tell our stories. Fate brought us there. That white frosted veil gave us the perfect excuse to build a custom-cut world. A world suspended in a snowy time and space. A world of listening and learning. And then I like to listen, it’s something I’m good. That extraordinary and rare snow allowed us to share a plot of evidences more and more dense, important and engaging. The first to jump into the narration was Vera. I was careful not to miss even a comma of the story, like the girl in front, who without saying a word, puts the newspaper on her knees, she was ready to listen.*

(From “The train of the suspended time”)

## Stomach

The hunger that does not quit, the hunger of those who do not even have bread. The expectations of distribution, the line, a little girl pressed within the group. We are not in Africa but in Europe, in the East before the collapse of the Berlin wall.

*By now it is 7 o'clock in the evening, the impatience is setting in, voices are rising, some women argue with those who want to be smart and pass ahead. Even the child's stomach does not let up; it doesn't want to stop reminding her that she has to eat something. But she must stand there, motionless, careful, without letting her guard down, in order to impede people to pass ahead. If that happens, all this waiting could become useless. If this blessed truck would arrive, I thought, I could stop founder because of hunger pains and of concern for the mother's gaze becoming darker and darker. When hope is at breaking point, in the dark, the truck of the bread finally arrives. People with a hungry look, but glad, began to push. The child feels faint, but she endures. By now she no longer has the earth under her feet, she is transported and shoved by the crowd. Until when she feels the counter that crushes her already exhausted stomach. In the crowd she lost sight her mother, but luckily she has the carnet. She passed it to the clerk who pulls out that day coupon and gives her the bread ration. In the moonlight the two figures move away briskly from the big and impressive shop, with the slogan lighted up by neon: "The Romanian Socialist Party Protects You."*

(From "An Aircraft for Julie")

## Belly

Alive recording, a writing that fixes mental associations and reflections, offered to the others. The gravid belly and the empty belly. The nervous belly and the belly full of butterflies, the belly that is the beginning and the end of all things. There is not a plot here, just the gathering of a shared carpet, around everybody bellies.

*Mirela: I immediately associate the belly issue with the feelings issue. The love: the butterflies in the stomach, the burly burly that we create when we are in love! The happiness: I guess, because I do not know it yet, to hold in your lap (in the belly) a son or daughter. Then I associate it to the work: "feeling with the belly" to me means understanding, suffering together, feeling the difficulties lived by the person who tells herself in front of me and wants to share in order to become lighter.*

*Anida: If you tell me belly, at this moment I think of pregnancy; the image of a soft and comfortable belly comes to my mind, a sense of protection.. the availability ...and then I think to the tension and the emotional life that pass across the belly, my belly has some emotional muscles.. so if you tell me belly I think "how many things experienced my belly", in other words you can take strength from your belly, it reconnect you to yourself.*

*Solange: When I looked at the picture (the mentor's stylized shape, ndr) I thought the belly, do you understand? Because an empty belly creates many things. A person who does-*

*n't eat is not free, a person who doesn't eat is always looking for something. I told belly because in Africa, for example, there are many problems that affect the food, the water...*

Charlotte: *For what is the war? The war is for money, for the belly, to eat ...*

Solange: *There's a war, there's no water, you see children suffering. For what? For food, because there is an empty belly.*

Charlotte: *Something more important is the belly where the world is born, where the child is born. The son makes the world. This is very important. Everything, the life, the world, begins from the belly.*

(From "Belly issue")

## Hands

A unique act in an interior. The monologue is an intimate monologue. The story is about the drama of an online persecution. The girl's nervous hands are moving fast and efficiently on a computer keyboard. Technological and brave hands, which ultimately have the power to stop that virtual violence, and close the PC at once.

The face is illuminated only by the light of the PC, Sara is visibly annoyed, she says "no" with her head. With her right hand, well-groomed, she clicks with the mouse and then she pushes it away, suddenly. Desperate, she takes her face with both hands. Sara:

- *Keep calm, Sara. Breathe. Uffffff! What a drag!*
- *What a man! Really! I'm sick of his constant presence!*
- *Okay, but now you are at home, Sara; and you're safe.*

She stands up and makes a turn around the table. She glances at the white wall in front of her, where are projected memories of a past that she no longer wants to see and the images of that ended relationship. Sara:

- *Those moments we spent together, yes, they were beautiful. But, actually, the moments torn by your behavior were more than the beautiful ones.*
- *How many bruises I have on my skin. How many words are lost. Tears. Unnecessary strokes. Bitter kisses.*
- *I have done so much for you. I never imagined that you would become like this; how blind was I. By now I'm sure it is time to end this vicious circle, which does not allow me to turn the page once and for all. I feel that I still run aimlessly, like a hamster unnecessarily running in the wheel.*
- *Enough is enough! That is really enough!*

She heaves a sigh. She sits again, she takes a sip of tea and she, extremely convinced, lowers the screen with a bang. And now everything is black, like a curtain that closes on the stage of life.

(From "Obsessive presence")

## Feet

Feet give support and balance. Feet to remember which are the roots we came from. Modest feet, often bare. But strong and tough, perfect to run away and survive. Essential and necessary means to go and look for a better life and to find a way out. We talk about feet all together, holding a cup of tea that reminds us the smells and colours of our far away country, a stream of consciousness, that smells like ginger and mint, shared within the group. Talking about feet is like Proust's talking about his madeleine. The dialogue is becoming tight, the rhythm of the thoughts becomes dense and apparently random. An "I" narrator is superfluous. We choose the direct discourse, immediate and without mediations.

In Hodan's house, drinking a mint tea offered by Hodan, eating some cookies brought by Sadia. She made them, using love mixed together with memories and a lot of ginger; they smell in such a way to mix the feelings of all. There was also Andreia's apple pie, exactly the same that her grandmother usually made, with that scent of cinnamon that filled every room of the house. Hodan:

*Feet. They are the protagonists of a very important memory and they are the feet of my mother: a miracle. Despite her age, they were incredibly young, with no signs of age, they were decorated with geometric shapes drawn with the henna, the geometry of reason and maturity. It was no longer the time of floral patterns, as it is when you are a young girl. They had walked a lot, those little feet still intact. They had trodden on the land of Africa and took her far away, to America.*

*Sadia: I think about the feet of my son, that remind me my dad's feet, so similar to mine. Wandering feet that have trodden on Africa and Asia to get to Padua. I think about all this and I cannot look at my feet without love and gratitude.*

*Keltoume: I look at my feet and I think that they have been the fulcrum of my growth. I think at them when they were naked, unprotected by shoes and stockings; they went just a few steps, just to go from a small village to another one. I never imagined that they would take me, literally, in a different world: from southern Morocco to Italy.*

*Rajae: My feet are my starting point, my go. Every step marked my past and will mark my future. An Arab proverb says: "Where you put your feet, you put your mind". My feet gave me hope to carry on, power to make things better for me and my son and they allowed me to build a world apart, alone, without help.*

*Hind: My feet have been the tool that I used in order to change my life, several times. They brought me to Europe with my husband. They separate me from my family and my loved ones, but they allowed me to start walking towards an independent life. They were also the bolt with which I disrupted the nightmare that my life as a couple had become. They were, are and will remain my great strength, the resource to change things.*

*Hodan: In a world at war, before using your mind, your thought, you use your feet. They are the ones that will save lives.*

Andreia: *The head is certainly more important than the feet, but the feet help it to implement plans and aspirations, to travel - which is what the brain likes so much - to meet new people, new situations and to change your life.*

(From “Our twelve feet”)

Feet to make us stay and not to escape. Feet that do not feel like running away or did not have the time to do it. The proof of this inability of movement and action comes from Cameroon. With the clear and cool chronicle of the poisonous relations of subordination and violence that bind women to men.

*Marriage is a family affair and the responsibilities of the break, whatever happens, always fall on the shoulders of the wife. You're the guilty: you are not able to meet your husband's requests and he is going away with another woman. And you, a failed woman, you are no longer a good woman. You become just a big, unbearable problem. In Cameroon social services that can help women are lacking and the only ones to ask for help are uncles, aunts, grandmothers, mothers who have other things to think about and do not want to take charge of these situations.*

*And then, there are not only betrayals. Because it often occurs that violence start. Even a journalist of a major state television has gone on the air for years with clear signs of beating by her husband on her face. And yet she has never wanted to leave him. After years of public beatings, only the intervention of government authorities has imposed this woman, so famous and important, to divorce. Then, think to other women, to those who are not so beautiful and famous. You may remember that respected high school teacher in the city who has lived for years together with the violence and treachery of her husband. Everyone knew, no one spoke, and she did not fled. She waited. It happened that one day she did not arrived at school. The last hit had come together with the last fall, the fatal one.*

(From “African Marriage”)

## Head

Head: it is like expressing the synthesis. The synthesis of eyes, mouth, ears, nose and something else. It also refers to hands and feet. And more, to thighs, taste, hearing, smell. But also to touch and proprioception (i.e. the ability to perceive and recognize the position of her body in the space and the state of contraction of her muscles, even without the support of the view). Talking about the head is like talking about the brain, encephalon. Head is the rationality that gives strength. It is the hypothalamus, the main control centre, receiving the essential information required to ensure the proper functioning of the body, to ensure the correct reactions, functional as well as useful. Of course, information comes from the internal as well as the external environment. And the hypothalamus efficiently answers to it, sending clear signals, nervous or hormonal. For example, stimulating or inhibiting the secretion of adrenaline, the hormone “fights or flees”.

Three stories may represent, perhaps better than others, this synthesis that becomes organized force, and it becomes real power and autonomy. The first is the one of Zika, the second that of Manuela, the third is The Circle of violence.



Zika, the Albanian old woman and great-grandmother, who was able to challenge everything, just to protect her daughters and her grandchildren. Clear headed witness of the misfortunes of her country and clear-headed, respected holder of the power of justice in the family, to the last. Despite the strength of preconceived rules and despite male violence with which she had to confront in the course of her long life.

*My great-grandmother, Zika. What a woman, what a strength. Everyone feared her, in the sense that they were in awe of her judgment. When the daughters or grandchildren had problems with their husbands, she noticed it. She absolutely noticed if someone was “pressing a bit too much one of her daughters or her daughters in law. In short, if only one of the women in her big house had a problem, she immediately intervened: “Meeting”. And the meeting was made, with the couple and the parents of both, or better, with the fathers of both. Actually, she was somewhat discriminating: better to discuss these things with the fathers. He had to follow the rules of the time and it is partly still true today in some countries, it could be Albania or Southern Italy, but also from other parts, not necessarily just in the south of the world. From that meeting it has to come to the surface what had happened, who was wrong and how to find a solution in order not to make this episode happening again. Zika, what a woman! She spoke little and had so many lives in herself. How many? First, her own and that of her husband, who died at the age of 30 leaving her alone with three children; then her mother, orphan and widow, but of a unique humanity. Zika brought all these lives in her, but they were never enough. How many more lives Zika shields, in all the stories she knew, the ones she helped to mend and omit; inside she kept also the lives of her three children, children who had to grow on their own, in the in-laws house. When her husband recently deceased, they told her: “Choose, you can go home with your mother,” and she said - “Although surrounded by hungry wolves I will stay here. No one moves me from here, this is my home: four walls pulled up with straw and hay “. I wonder where she found all the strength, Zika. When I met her, she had gained the esteem of all and she had been able to build a decent home, like all the others around her, no more, no less. She got her children married and now the grandchildren. She took care of grandchildren and the serenity of her large family. We are more than 40 children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren to be her descendants.*

(From “Zika”)

Manuela, the tenacious young woman who lives our time heads on, armed with clear ideas and courage. The courage to leave home, to choose a long way and certainly more difficult way. A free and informed choice that will allow her to earn that state that since childhood she decided would be her state. Mentor to herself and others.

*I challenged myself and I wanted to know if I could have made it without the protective help of my parents and boyfriend. This masochist spirit sometimes comes out... The*

*relationship between us has really improved in the distance, although this break with home weighs on me. It is difficult to change the mentality of the parents, even if you do not give them any reason to worry about you, but it is especially difficult to change the negative aspects that you inherit from them.*

*Seeing them fighting and seeing how systematically my father tried to sour my mother for everything, from food, leisure, holidays, attitudes towards us, since I was 5 years I thought that I would have fought against all this suffering that heavily burden on the shoulders of women and, as a result, that I would have found a man who was quite the opposite. When I was 15, I had already decided that in my house he should cook. Actually, I have always refused to learn how to cook, at least until I decided to go out of my country. Once in Italy, however, I had to survive. And then I also discovered that I liked to cook together with others very much. Household chores - I thought - would be divided equally. But above all, the man I would find would never allow me to suffer and treat me badly. These beliefs have helped me develop a strong character, determined, arrogant in some ways, with the certainty that I would have given a lot only to those who deserved it. In hindsight, after some years, thinking on how my relationships with men were, I think that it is sometimes difficult to figure out who deserves love and who does not, and who deserves what kind of love. But what does it mean 'deserve'? What does it mean 'not suffering'? While I was in my country I was more confident, but I was also younger. How can you avoid hurting others? Many times I found myself wanting to bite my arms when I answered "no" to a compliment or a kindness, it was an automatic response, uncontrollable ... What does the respect mean? The sex? The body? The complicity? The sharing of goods, values, dreams? What does it mean to build together without anyone prevailing on the other? What is freedom, independence? All these questions have multiplied since I found myself in a country where women's struggles would have been overtaken by time, but actually not. All these questions started multiply when I felt in love with an Italian. I still can-not solve them, but I'm glad that at least my desire when I was 5 years has been met: I was able to fulfil myself in a profession that aims to help people who find themselves in trouble, and I can say that there are two important men in my life: the first one was caring, tender and an engine of ideas, the second challenging, concrete, with good mediation skills and joyful.*

(From "Manuela")

The story of a migrant woman that represents the story of all migrants, who face daily difficulties in a land of strangers.

*This time we are in two, my colleague and I. We listen to Anna again, we gave her the same information of the last time. Unfortunately, the bad news is that if the documents are not ready Anna risks the renewal of the permit of stay. In other words it's a point of vital importance. We know it very well, Viola (my colleague) and I, the permit of stay for us -strangers- is the life, is the warrantee of our daily bread, the possibility to have a decent roof above our heads and a regular work. ... Anna, but, are you crying? Bloodshot and enlarged eyes cannot hold back the tears anymore. What went first?*

- *Of employers, who to protect their work or because it's too difficult don't look for information and take lightly the cost of hiring an immigrant citizen. They don't realize it, because the bureaucratic process for immigrants is higher, but even the consequences are higher from them. Indifference is violence.*
  - *Of the labour market, whose disparities in access it seem to be really insurmountable for those women, immigrants and moreover from Easter Europe. An extra, well. The brand is violence.*
  - *Of the economic crisis that produce unemployed and devalued labour creating a racialization of labour market and encouraging the exploitation of itself, requires the acceptance of conditions unfavourable and to push it into the hands of new forms of slavery. Odd opportunity is violence.*
  - *Of the Italian migration policy that creates legal inequalities. It turns out hundreds and hundreds of second-class citizens, and even distinguish them according to the possession of the permit of stay, and if so, under what type of permission you're holding. Inequality is violence*
- ... How to tackle the violence that so insidiously permeates our lives of immigrants?...It's not the violence itself, but its normalization is scary ... The thing that comforts me is that I still have power and I must be conscious to close the circle of violence. This is not because I have super powers, but because I know what there's under, I know the violence and I call it with its name, because only if we name and disclose it, we can fight it.*

(From “The Circle of violence”)

## 9.7. A Glance from Outside at the Beads&Words Laboratory

I've approached the recording of the Beads&Words Laboratory trying to find out what the work of trainers and attendees was telling me and in what it was challenging my gaze. I found out that the work in progress was resonating with what Aihwa Ong (1995) noticed in her research on Asian immigrant women in USA:

*Their stories of emigration, loss, vulnerability, and desire express evolving hybrid subjectivity and changing moral agency than simply emancipation.*

Something different from a “simple emancipation” was taking place during the laboratory: not a matter of collective “conversion” to any feminist ideology, but rather individual and collective events and paths of reflexivity; they were so various that the outcomes in terms of women's agency remain opened and unpredictable.

To face VAW, each patriarchal society needs an unavoidable reflexive attitude: it requires being focused on both the single's experience of violence and the struggle for the recognition of each type of violence.

Recognition is a socio-cultural process through which violence is named, de-naturalized and made understandable as a shared and transcultural “intolerable” issue. On another side, recognition is also the single process of individualization that, through the telling or listening to violent experiences by each person, allows everyone to acquire greater awareness of one’s gendered being-in-the-world. Thus acting against VAW means paying attention to women’s multiple acts of speech; these women endured and are still enduring violence. Speaking out becomes the act of putting together different pieces and types of knowledge and tactics that everyone gained: this allows to increase our resources but it also reshapes our gaze, making us more able to grasp and understand every kind of social suffering.

It is on the basis of those assumptions that the Laboratory was thought and moved its steps. It’s also on these bases that this part of the Report will try to explain how the Laboratory actually proceeded, and what it was at stake. By dealing with the Laboratory only through the registrations, and being aware of the whole project, we are in the position of the outsider-within, the best or the worst location from which we can give an “objective” account. We decided to consider the Laboratory as a possible work in progress towards a deeper comprehension of how VAW shapes everyone’s life. The insights that the attendees shared, the limits and the difficulties they had to face and – considering they’ve tried to find out common tactics to get out of VAW – their embodied knowledge trouble, can improve European, or at least Italian, institutional services and change hegemonic representations of what VAW is about.

### **The Laboratory as a Multi-Diversity Setting in European Societies**

The laboratory Beads&Words can be thought as a relational temporal-space location provided to 32 women of different ages, of different (un)labour and familiar conditions, and primarily socialized in various cultural-political-economic contexts differing from the Italian one. Women that cannot be grouped under the “ethnic” or “professional” label, but that were all sharing the experience of migrating and the fact of having to inhabit, in the laboratory, a “mestizo” linguistic environment, due the fact that Italian was not their native language.

The laboratory was a room, and at the same time a lecture hall, not only “of one’s own”, but also “of our own”; the “us” we refer to consists of each person in the room, despite the distinction between attending women and trainers. A socio-temporal location in which, meeting after meeting, a shared culture aimed at empowering each woman that emerged from, was starting from, and was coming from inside everyone’s differences, avoiding hierarchies or homologations. This culture is the one characterizing the “mentor of community”, which is the new figure of the civil society whose peculiar method for preventing and responding to VAW in an horizontal way has been created and experimented along the workshop.

The laboratory started by an self-presentation by Sara Cavallaro, who introduced herself as an expert of VAW, working in different socio-cultural contexts (Venice, Alger, Sarajevo) and in different organizational and institutional cultures (NGO, women's crisis centres, social shelters for women and children, hospital unit for women victims of violence, councillorship). From the beginning, Sara told that she would be available to share all the knowledge she gained in her professional and personal life: she offered a chance and a challenge to build symmetrical relationships.

Then the guidelines and the format of the workshop were presented to the attendees. Every morning has been structured in a moment with the purpose of collective fruition of the training material (film or novels), followed by an hour's discussion in smaller groups, and finally a shared moment in which the results of each group were discussed together. The members of the groups of discussion, each made up of 5-6 women, were not the same during the weeks: the composition of the groups changed with each meeting also in order to assure a heterogeneity regarding the linguistic-geographical women's origins. As it was once stated by one of the attendee, the group discussion had been precious because «everyone of us gave her opinion and at the end we've find out that was coming out something that alone would not be so wealth and productive» (Y).

Training material was made up of:

## FILMS

*Fried Green Tomatoes*, 1991, by Jon Avnet  
*The Long Silence*, 1963, by Alfred Hitchcock  
*The Women on the 6<sup>th</sup> Floor*, 2010, by Philippe Le Guay  
*"Born at home"*, 2006, by Giuliana Musso.

## NOVELS

*Bluebeard*  
*Women who run with the Wolves*, by Clarissa Pinkola Estés  
*One thousand and One nights*  
*Beloved*, by Toni Morrison  
*The life after the slaughter: Marzabotto 2008*, by Anna Rosa Nannetti

### **I Step: "From Words to One's Own Knowledge to Everyday Experience"**

The first two meetings were organized in order to develop a reflexive work on the words and on the semantic fields which are dealt by the media, politicians and social services when speaking about VAW in its multiple dimensions. These words refer to the multiple social suffering which migrant women can experi-

ence, the effects that this violence can have on them (on their bodies and on their feelings), but also it refers to the resources that can be mobilized in order to react to VAW, such as creativity, struggle, the spoken word, solidarity, networks.

In the group discussions, the task given to the attendees was to find out the situations in which those words were illustrated or at stake in the plot of the films; by starting a negotiation on the meanings each one gave to these words a new process of signification, more anchored to the very experience of the women, was opened. A re-signification which passed not only through the social experiences narrated in the films, but also through the experiences narrated by the attendees (and undergone by themselves, their friends, their neighbours).

During the discussion different locations of where VAW is produced and reproduced were thought and emerged: they can be synthesized and analytically framed as a) a violence played and based on a very social and institutional ground, and b) a violence growing in the field of interpersonal relationships.

For both those aspects, violence does not only includes, on a material level, phenomena of coercion, segregation, physical harm; it also includes practices at symbolic level. Symbolic violence is more pervasive because, making some social and gendered hierarchies become natural and unconscious, hinder the dominated to be aware of the relations of power in which he/she is situated, hampering her/him to image an everyday life that is more powerful of the one endured, hampering to transform the way she/he perceives her/himself and so hampering his/her capability to act and re-act in the relationships. The attendees managed to recognize how VAW can be pervasive by understanding how the feeling to be underpowered and not recognized in one's needs and desires is socially produced by society, at large, and also in intimate, and not only heterosexual, relationships.

S., referring to one of the character of the film “*Fried Green Tomatoes*”, said

*I felt pain when there was Evelyn that was coming back home.. and her husband cared just about what she had cooked for him, but he didn't care of the rest, not even of her suffering. Every day she came back home, even when she tried to improve (ed. aesthetically) herself, he didn't gave her anything.. he stand there looking at the TV, or other stuffs.*

C. on her side told the other attendees the violence endured by one of her neighbour in Italy

*her husband used to bring prostitutes at home and he battered her. She had already a child and he used to throw in her teeth that he was him to had free her from poverty ... She wanted to quit, but with three children, without a work, she used to ask me “how can I do?” ... I looked after her children, the older was not so good at school, I helped him to do homework ... She was 50 ... she said me “which kind of job can I do?”, how could she managed alone.*

The violence this woman endured is also due to the fact that, in Italy one of the cultural scripts defining “women” is the essentialization of woman as “natural” caregiver. This cultural codification, which has also been spread by media, of the Italian familistic welfare state and the market of labour, reinforces the “material” dependency of women. Two examples show how, working on personal experiences in a gender friendly context, women are able to state, in a very simple way, that the symbolic order they inhabit is sexist, unilateral and potentially violent for women. Naming the real world they know in the everyday life, women recognized a Mobius-type productive relation between symbolic order and the material dependency they often experience in marriages.

In addition, throughout the workshop, the attendees recognized how this double track, the material but also the “cognitive” one, characterize the violence produced by public institutions and by the socially recognized forms of authority. C. states how she perceived, in the film, the violence produced by the institutions:

*the undisputed words of the priest: no one question the speech of religious authority, even if telling the untruth. Also from the juridical point of view, the sequence in the court, obviously of the whites, no one give credibility to the words of a black or a tramp... if a black died, it wasn't a problem, but if any white was dead, it was the catastrophe... There is the violence of the power when the power becomes inquisition, judgment.*

The violence here is not only discrimination, segregation, exploitation which is exercised in the Italian migratory context following the racist trend, but violence is also constituted by hierarchies of values given to feelings and given to sufferings. Violence is the denial of the intelligibility of anyone’s life, the denial of credibility to anyone’s story. This violence is produced when the gender-related violence reported by asylum seekers, undocumented, or imprisoned have to be extensively proved while it is not immediately believed by local police, social services, judges. The migrants’ eyes mirror a very critical vision of the Italian society. Gender-based violence appears to the attendees as multidimensional, especially regarding the stratification among migrants and natives that is sometimes present also in the practices of social services working with battered women.

*A.: We've thought as an example of network, the self-help group Eveline was taking part in... but this group, in itself, did not manage to give results... and then she was judged by the facilitator;*



S.: *There are social workers that say “this woman is not good enough, she doesn’t understand, so she deserves it (the violence)”*.

When the local welfare professionals cannot recognize or accept the multiple and different ways in which a woman interprets, also in an active way, her intimate violent relationship, reducing her to a “simple” victim, the empowerment is hindered. The participants of the Laboratory discussed also the risk of a neo-colonial approach that is sometimes present in the local welfare system when social workers interpret the situation in the place of the woman. The implicit or explicit imposition of a “modern” standardized pattern of “liberation”, hampers, at least, the woman’s reflexivity. In this case she cannot elaborate a piece of knowledge through suffering, which is precisely the way in which a woman can give value back to her everyday life despite the violence she endures. As Sara underlined several times, the tools given by bio-medicine, psychology, legislation do not have to be used as a commitment but as a shared choice made by the woman and the social worker trusting each other. The deconstruction of the power relationship between the professional and the victim could be for her the starting point to escape from violence.

In the Laboratory, assuming this peer-to-peer position, the time and the gestures of the story are acts of sharing and occasions to gain trust and authority, both for the story-teller and the listener. During this first part of the laboratory the attendees –with the aim to act as Mentor in the future – started to think about resources, practices and postures through which helping women to escape violence or to avoid the risks of violence. Mutual trust and the fact of sharing the suffering have been considered, by the attendees, as the most important thing.

Trust is linked to the fact of granting women the freedom to choose in which way, to whom, and when she wants to speak; also the (sometimes dangerous) choice to be silent is accepted. Trust is not necessarily assured by the simple fact of sharing the same socio-cultural origin. H. explained:

*I had a friend that was battered by her boyfriend and she used to avoid me. We were in the same residence, and she avoided me not to tell me what was going on; until me and her, we became really good friend, like sisters. At the end she started to tell me what she couldn’t tell to the others, and she left her boyfriend. And this, it happens also among countrywomen/ men, ‘cause you’re afraid to tell.*

## **II Step: From Story-Telling to Creative Writing**

Three mornings were dedicated to this part of the laboratory; in the first morning, a journalist, Giulietta Raccanelli made a lecture presenting different literary styles and techniques such as fiction, biography, creative nonfiction, memoirs; it was an overview on different narrative tools that attendees could use in their writings.



*The problem with the written word is that it fades away since you tell it and then you can't find it no more. The beauty of the written word is that you find it again, and you can take it when you want and how you want; and then you can focus on one thing, read another one, leave it... you can re-work it. And this effort is precisely the one of giving weight to words, this allow us to re-use when you need it (Giulietta Raccanelli).*

The insights, acquired through the experience lived, and then written by the attendees in their texts could really become a handbook of experiences available to train a Mentor. The passages Giulietta read were all taken from narratives dealing with endured violence and in which the act of narrating and witnessing became healing; they were texts where writing stories reveals the ways by which those sufferings can socialize and be transformed in an empowering way.

*Giving power to words* is precisely the aim of the writing exercise as well as of the *SPEAK OUT!* project: the convergence between the methodology of storytelling and the politics of the project seemed fruitful.

After having familiarized with those examples, the attendees were asked to start writing, while the other two mornings were dedicated to group drafting of the scripts. Some of the participants chose also to write stories about their own experience and they discussed with Giulietta, during the weeks and by e-mail, the progress of their texts. Giulietta engaged herself in a continuous effort of revision of all the drafts produced, by sharing with the attendees her writing skills and her expertise in the Italian language. As creative suggestions were used, some images and expressions previously emerged in the discussion on the films; in particular the location of the train and of the home threshold, and the image of the foot, were retained as the most evocative ones. Actually these two mornings revealed further occasions to narrate everyone's experience, in particular about the act of migrating. The writing practice in fact came after the first morning in which the attendees chose explicitly to dedicate time to the narration of how they arrived in Italy, how they considered their lives there and what they really thought about the fact of having displaced themselves among different social contexts.

*"Going and coming": when I have to go to another country it depends on what I'm going to do there, on the motivation that let us exiting, and this is important ... related to the need to exit ... And there is the "coming back", 'cause you came back changed, and you've done different experiences, and this make you feeling hanging in the balance, cause you are nowhere ... and it also changes the transport you chose, how do I dress and I relate to the other, if I am regularly documented or I am not (I).*

But despite the variety of objective conditions, of the contexts of origin, of the ways in which one left her country (alone, with husbands, parents, sisters, etc.), of the status previously had in the country of origin (ex. unmarried student, unemployed wife, etc.), the fact of having passed through migration in an-

other country seemed to speak to everyone in a common language, with shared experiential references. As M., in the group writing of the novel “The train under the feet” said «*you have elements of my very story, but it is not my story*».

These paths of migration can't be read in a dichotomy manner as it is clearly polarized on constraint or voluntariness: both the fact of escaping from, and re-searching for, were simultaneous and this shows the exercise of freedom thanks to which every attendee, in her specific and often dramatic conditions, left.

Among the others, T.'s story clearly exemplifies this tension:

*I'm here since two years ... my father was violent. And when I was a child I've lived this threat of death, for my mother first, and then for me and my brothers. He had a way to batter my mother with the feet, I was seeing just this, that he used his feet to hit my mother and I was using my feet to escape. This was the way ... he never hit me, only my brother and my sister. But what I was doing? Escape. Also right now, I can't go back home, it's two years that I don't speak with him ... My father thought that I had to stay home, looking after him, doing other stuffs .. .but not studying. Than my mother saw that I wanted to study, she took the money and left to Italy.*

Migration is a way to escape violence, but once arrived in the other country, the fact of having reached safety from VAW is not granted; violence can still be endured and also intensified in the public space of the new country. Often migrating women appear in the Italian social context as women and unskilled workers, who easily become the target of a process of heterosexism and ethnicisation. Objectified in sexualized stereotypes, women realize the impossibility to be recognized in their complexities, plurality and specificities, with the result of feeling distress and insecurity. A. told the others:

*For me it was a shock arriving here... I'm a Colombian, and then you open your eyes ... you realize that every man, of all ages, thinks that Latin-American women are all opened ... hot ... Moreover with the bullshit of the cocaine ... All men trying to talk with me about this. And they all blatantly make a move ... And I was afraid, cause once a bus driver invited me his home ... and that there were the colleagues in the restaurant where I've worked.. and also the owner of the restaurant ... In the places where you could have sociality, I do not do it anymore. And you are also afraid.*

The need for secured spaces of socialization making loneliness fade away, was represented in the writing by the metaphor of the train: it represents the very act of migrating and turning upside down their lives, but it's also one of the public transports daily used by migrant women to move in the Italian provinces and to web workplaces and homes.

*Usually in the train I take an hour for myself, the time of the displacement, I can do what I cannot do at home, to find some time ... freedom. There was a time when I've had*

*to work in Mestre caring some elderly men, but my home was in Bassano ... so when I left the old people, it was a freedom for me, because that work was really heavy. So I used to take the train, and there was my family that was waiting for me, and it was a liberation for me the fact of giving time to myself during the travel (M.).*

The train becomes also the metaphor of the possibility to give oneself encounters with strangers in a lapse of time rescued from working and caring family members:

*what we search in this train is to find comfort from those women to whom we tell our stories, and then we get off the train and we fell more powerful.*

In a morning of this part of the laboratory the attendees were asked to draw the outline of a Mentor in a big paper that was hanged up in the room: a woman was sketched and the attendees indicated the eyes, but also the feet, as the most powerful part of the body. The eyes, because «*it's a play of gazes the fact of re-born*» after the violence, it's through the looking in other's eyes that you find the confirmation that that story of violence is over. But also all the body is involved:

*you go with your tummy and your feet, cause perhaps you're escaping, and you don't know what you're carrying; but you come with head and hands, in the sense that you have to work, meet, adapt, etc. (A.)*

An Arabic proverb was also cited in this occasion, it states: «*where I put the feet, I put my head*» (R.). The feet, the women said,

*we don't care about them, we often forget them ... but then, when there are the men who kill us, we don't waste time in thinking, you run! And then you can feel the feet really grounded, you feel that they can put roots. And this helps you a lot in thinking ... that I go, but then it comes a point where I stop, and when I stop, I stay ... and what am I when I stop? What do I give, as Mentor, in that moment, when I stop in front of a woman? (H.).*

### **III Step: From the Story-Telling to the Community Mentor Charter**

The last two meetings of the laboratory were precisely dedicated to point out the characteristics of what is a Mentor of Community's approach in acting against VAW: a Charter was finally elaborated.

Before the drafting of the Charter, the discussion of these two last Saturday were based on the very experiences of the attendees who reflexively thought about the occasions in which they had to face VAW, both as professionals and as persons directly concerned: in particular the problems and the difficulties they had to manage. Moreover the discussion moved also from the reading of a pre-

vious Charter, elaborated in 2010, during an Anti-Violence Training Course in the Veneto territory. The “Charter of the everyday practices for the gender/human rights: guidelines for a life free from violence” was taken as a model to be criticized and improved. It was aimed at networking the social actors concerned by the VAW (social workers, health workers, policemen, etc.) in order to grant an integrated and gender oriented service in the entire region for women who endure violence. The most important statement of that Charter, “*Giving voice to the women and person enduring violence*”, was not considered the same than *SPEAK OUT!* perhaps because a Community Mentor should assume a *peer-to-peer* attitude, *de facto* different from the asymmetrical relationship between someone working in a social service, even in an Anti-Violence Centre, and a victim of violence. Sara, who participated also in the definition of the previous Charter, facilitated the consideration on the changing perspective.

The main issue that was part of every discussion in the laboratory is the normative dimension that is at stake when thinking and practicing ways to react to VAW. This normative and moral aspect is due also to socio-cultural representations of what is tolerable, of how women are expected to behave and incorporate their gendered roles in the public space, in the families and in intimate relationships, of which “empowering patterns” are defined as appropriate. But the evident cultural and moral variables which are at the core can’t be read in an “ethnicised” manner: it’s not an opposition of Italian versus “migrant” ways of conceiving VAW, neither is a clash among religions, kinds of familiar structures, kinds of different gendered social relations. It is rather an exercise of transculturation among all the social roles each one inhabits has been considered by the attendees unavoidable in order to make the care relation bearable and effective. Thus it was taken as an essential requirement a reflexive effort that does not simply perpetuate the automatic attitudes prescript by institutional, religious or cultural norms but that let those norms to be questioned by the knowledge acquired through the lived experiences and by one’s own agency. The issue of what has often been defined by policies and medias as “multiculturalism”, that is actually the issue of the difference, emerged during the discussion, but in order to overcome it showing how actually a supposed clash among cultures is just a rhetoric fiction.

S. told the others how once she has been battered by her husband:

*I had to go to the disco. And he didn't want. When I'm stressed I like to go to the dance at the disco. And I've told him.. I go with your sister. But then one month before he found an argument to not let his sister come. "She stays home". "Why?" And then talking I had the mouth opened, and his finger entered in and made me an injury. I immediately went to the ER: I had 10 stitches ... They told me to go to the police and make a complaint. I didn't want to go, 'cause I thought that he could go to prison. But then I thought: why he injured me? He saw that I was bleeding and he escaped. So I said, no, he could let me die. So I did the complaint.*

After some minutes another woman took part to the discussion:

*What? A married woman that go to a disco? She have to stay at home... this is what my culture would immediately tell me... you're married, if you are alone you could do what you want. But when you marry... This is what my culture would say unless I think it with more tranquillity... I came here that I was already 'done', an adult. With a culture. And then as a woman I start to acculturate me in another way. I question a bit myself.*

The effort to avoid letting automatisms speak and act in our place is precisely the effort in which participants decided and actually engaged themselves in. The respect of everyone's differences, included the very differences of oneself, and the fact of taking a breath from the social interactions merely informed by the socio-cultural stereotypes have been considered a precious approach of the Community Mentor. But this, as we will see, wasn't recognized as enough in itself.

One of the participants considered her wearing the veil as a possible insuperable distance between herself and the other women she could encounter in her activity of Community Mentor. Actually European mainstream media and national policies often define the veil as a symbol of definite otherness from the "western" values of empowerment and autonomy: L. was worried about being hampered, by the fact of her willing to be herself by wearing the veil, to be recognized as a dignified partner in a care relationship with other women. But S. stated in responding her: *«the first thing that I see is the fact that you actually are at ease with your veil, and then I don't even notice the rest»*.

Actually one of the other key attitudes that participants thought and pretended to be the very characteristic of a Community Mentor is the fact of not feeling and not making anyone feel forced to anything. The absence of constraint has to be granted for the woman who endures VAW but also for the mentor herself: the relationship of care has to be bearable for both the persons involved.

N. for example left to the collective discussion one experience of suffering she underwent as a social worker in Italy:

*Months ago, I was working with the mobile unit service, in (...), in a shelter structure for the ones coming from Libia. It was an emergency structure, young girls and young boys were living together and anything happened. And every month I was charged with going with the girls to the family planning service, to have abortion. I had to do this regularly. I couldn't endure anymore, doing that work, I couldn't bear it. Was this a prejudice? What else could I do?... I went speaking to the chief of the service, and he told me 'N. you have to do the empty inside your head, you have to empty yourself'. But it was years that I was trying to have a baby, and this work.. I've really lived it as a violence.*

This second episode shows how the fact of avoiding violence does not mean, and cannot be granted, by erasing the differences from the social space. The above-mentioned Charter, in its 4th article, foresees: “When we encounter a battered woman, we have to give her help without judging her and without assuming prejudices related to our social and professional roles or to “our” culture”. Actually, the participants shared and refined this requirement, mostly in the 4th and 5th article of the Charter for Community Mentor, but they also added in the 8th article “The Mentor must use herself as a tool: flexibility, authenticity and self-esteem must always be with her; in the relationship her way of dressing and talking become resources”. Moreover the 10th article states: “When she deals with an emergency, the Mentor must always have the consciousness of her limits. To recognize our limits is a sign of professionalism”.

Professionalism is also the fact of taking the time, as it is stated in the 3th article of the Mentor’s Charter, “ there is the time which takes time, and that is the time for reflection; there is the concrete time for helping; there is the realistic and possible time for disappointment, which, however, is not a waste of time”.

*I work with asylum seekers, with refugees, in the CIE (Administrative Retention Centres for Undocumented). You think that giving too much weight to what it has happened, you can gain something. You enter into a dynamic which is based on the thought of how showing that my story is horrible, that they’ve done this and this to me. And you create some dynamics that do not let you think to the others tool you could use (N.).*

It is the time to think how to exit from victimizing dynamics at the very same time that you’re attempting to successfully gain the rights you deserve.

In conclusion we would like to highlight the fact that the Charter for Community Mentor is not only a guideline for the Community Mentor as a professional, but it can be read, and it has been thought by the attendees, also as a sets of principles which, if followed, actually can grant an effective citizenship for everyone, in particular in the relationships that every woman (migrant or not) have to, and/or can bear with welfare institutions and with other institutional actors (such as policemen).

In fact what has been at stake during the all laboratory is a path to construct and achieve a real belonging in the places in which women live, to conquer the full and effective right to inhabit contemporary Europe and Italy, despite their provenience, their backgrounds and the multiple communities to which they chose to belong. That is gaining the social rights whose fruition is hampered by patriarchal/sexist violence, by poverty and by institutional violence. It’s a voice claiming the right to feel and to experience safety, and it shows a way to practice it.

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## 9.8. Controversial Issues Lab

### 9.8.1. First Question. How Could MRM Women Manage their Multiversity Acting as Community Mentor on VAW Issues?

This Lab aims at obtaining a more realistic inclusion of MRM women in the European/Italian debate on VAW policies giving voice to the multiplicity of their discourses. They are very often silenced in the public debate, being represented prevalently by men’s point of views or by the “native” women’s interpretation, both thought as the right approach to the universal rights or to an homogeneous communitarian tradition.

For our project it seemed to be necessary translating the mainstream discourses on VAW into different cultural meanings for the participants, especially giving voice to the sensibilities, questions and doubts a Mentor could meet in a multicultural context. The Lab. stressed the importance of a gender based approach in the recognition of reciprocal differences and in the interpretation of the access to the system of individual rights within the European/Italian political and cultural pluralism.

The regime of personal freedom, universal rights, gender equality defines the frame of VAW definitions and the European and National policies against violence on women, where a presumed homogeneity of the human rights discourse is considered as standard criterion for each person. Nevertheless if the aim to overcome gender based violence could be considered a common goal, the discourse and the practices are very far to be homogenous especially on family,

marriage, reproduction rights and sexuality issues, in the public arena and also in the feminist field of anti-violence. In the feminist mainstreaming debate the human rights approach is interpreted sometimes within a conflict of modernity versus backwardness, replicating a dualism between “we” and the “others” also in the discourses on MRM women and on VAW typologies.

The Lab. underlined the controversial side of the discourses relating to violence in order to define a path for a transcultural women’s community, trying to transform our classroom from a *land of strangers* into a possible *borderland of mestiza*. Differences are compared starting from experiences and personal meanings compared to the definitions and norms presumed as universal on the basis of the dualism between modern/traditional ways to life. For this reason, we put under scrutiny the emphasis on the possible link between the honour crimes and the moral obligation of virginity before marriage and wife’s fidelity as well as the silence on the romantic love ideology relating to “modern passion crimes” which are covered by a confusing label of “femicide”.

The division between women considered as veiled or naked, modern or traditional, religious or secular, oppressed by the family or living in a family of choice, occurs at the empirical level and it is related to their cultural and political subjectivities but also constructed by some public discourse where the migrant women are substantially absent. The French debate on the so-called “Islam veils”, with the oversimplified interpretation of the oppression of some group of women, could be an example of it.

The introduction to the Laboratory was a discussion on violence and gender inequality in a globalized world, considering macro and micro data where gender inequality and male domination are connected with VAW typologies, in the developed equalitarian Countries as well as in the poorest and more patriarchal one’s. The persistency of VAW was considered from the side of the political internal limits of the Countries with equalitarian gender regimes, from the difficulty of changing some strongest patriarchal ideals, and from the side of the contradictory relations between women of sending and of receiving countries. The “heart transplantation” of migrant mothers leaving their children behind and the widespread world sex markets could be considered as structural contexts for VAW as well as occasions for specific women’s sufferings.

Within their differences, participants recognized the importance of women’s network to unveiling the inner violence especially in the husband-wife relationships, as well as the difficulties to have voice in the public arena, or simply to have the possibility to make choice in the violence cases without supporting by the surrounding people.

The most positive meanings connected with the anti-violence attitudes and circumstances were underlined considering the reality and the feeling to live in the “safe” space/place and the possibilities for mastering the personal choices in the intimate relationships within the different societies and gender regimes where MRM are living and where they are coming from. In all the cases women’s



body appears at the same time on the scene, as object to be defined mainly by masculine or prevalent Western-Northern discourse. MRM women considered how they remain in the backstage facing many difficulties to speak out and to decide for themselves.

The attendees to the Laboratory represented very often a non-standard cycle of violence. They recognized a deep link between symbolic-cultural, structural and institutional violence in their migration experiences. The expression of “the allowed violence” was presented by some women for the self-debasement using for accepting a low level work and as the representation of a low self-esteem to cope with the worsening emotional relationship. Especially more adult women recognised the difference between the use of the compliance for negotiating on their subaltern position and the acceptance of it.

The compliance was considered as the invisible side of violence also for women committed in maintaining the “normality” of family. It sustains also women’s blindness in the case of serious pain.

The Lab. discussion underlined the differences between “symbolic” and “psychological” violence considering the first as relating to some collective meanings of “normality” in facing gender roles and the second as relating to a specific relational pain. This discussion was introduced by a “neutral” scientific discourse to some problems finding in the measurement and definition of VAW labels in different contexts. It is very difficult to compare statistical measurements of the different VAW typologies and especially on psychological violence if the reciprocal expectations could be socially constructed within cultural different frames.

As everywhere, also for the women working in our project, cultural differences are socially stratified depending by the different type of belongings, relating to gender, social status/class, education, age, religion, growing up or living in the country or in the urban settlement. The practical intersectional discourse of the attendances, relating to the cultural relativist approach of the Laboratories and to the search for a non-relativist moral approach to the Mentor profile, helped the recognition of a common vocabulary. *Reciprocity, dignity, respect*, emerged as meanings indicating the opposite of violence, independently of the experts’ definitions or the statistical labels.

Considering some practical behaviour, as the choice of veiling, “early” marriage, arranged marriage or self-made marriage, cultural pluralism showed different degrees of mutual recognition but also some challenges. As a consequence it was often difficult to find convergences on the specific meanings and definitions of VAW.

Nevertheless, imagining finding some solution to escape from an intimate situation of violence, the divergences of opinion seemed coexisting with a general convergence on the necessity of a combination between the individual self-affirmative choice and the family oriented behaviour. When a woman decides to rebel against violence, the search for the support of the family and of the relatives’ net-

work is underlined not only as emotional expectation but also as sign of a positive relationship with the first circle of her public opinion. Often we can find this same attitude also in the short stories written for the Beads&Words Lab.

In the following pages some of the controversial issues under scrutiny are presented.

### **9.8.2. Second Question. Where do We Feel at Home?**

The question “Where do we feel at home?” was aimed at soliciting a comparison among the women present in the classroom (main trainer, facilitators and participants) on the topic of feeling at home, i.e. safe, and feeling unsafe in the urban spaces of our everyday life. We started discussing the definitions of security and safety that usually we take for granted. The main objective was to position ourselves in relation to the concepts of violence, insecurity, security and safety in order to discover similarities and differences among us, women of different age, social class and race.

Violence against women happens usually in the domestic sphere rather than outside and it is perpetrated by partners and family members rather than unknown people. However, women often feel unsafe when they are outside their home, although in most cases, this feeling is not a result of traumatic experiences actually lived, but rather of the subjective perception of danger. The fear and the feeling of being at risk is significantly influenced by evaluations, feelings, emotions, prejudices, norms and shared cultural models. The sense of unsafely results in protective and avoidance behaviours, that is aimed at preventing dangerous situations, which limit the freedom of women and their full citizenship.

The first point of collective reflection was the “Survey on women’s safety” conducted by ISTAT in 2006. The data showed that women’s (resident in Italy and, probably in majority, native) sense of safety was lower than men’s one, especially when they were on the street at night. Women interviewed adopted a range of behaviours aimed at increasing their sense of safety such as: do not go out in the evening or at night; to put the lock on car doors; to keep away from certain streets and places; to avoid certain people; to make sure that nobody entered the house; to bring along something to defend themselves.

First of all participants confirmed that they adopt similar strategies, in particular they do not go out alone in the evening or at night, but also they do not use sexy clothing to avoid to be mistaken for prostitutes, use hijab and keep away from certain places. However, the debate took two very particular directions: the first one on the relation between safety and social ties and the second one concerning the relation between risk perception and age.

In the first case, some Mentors underlined that being a foreigner increases the feeling of insecurity, because of the lacking of community protection, which in their opinion is much more powerful than the police.

*S.: Since I am a foreigner I'm more afraid here. When I'm at home I feel protected by the whole community, instead here, even if there are the cops, I have to be careful when I'm on the streets.*

In this case, feeling at home and, therefore, secure and free from fear, means being included in the social contexts surrounding them. We can add to this strand of discussion also that interventions on men-women relationship. For some participants putting their protection on the men's hands means allowing them the opportunity to affirm a relation of possession, which is based on the supposed women weakness.

In the second case, some interventions have highlighted the importance of age in relation to unsafely, both objective and subjective. The discussion, shown below, between two women is an example of the debate on this contested issue: young women, although they are sexually vulnerable, have less fear, this exposes them both to additional risks and to a greater control by their parents and by the men of their community of belonging.

*H.: The young woman is afraid because she has so much to lose.*

*I.: No I do not agree, when I was 21 I went around at night, both in Morocco and in Italy. I felt safe, I now feel more unsafe. Because I think to my daughter, if something happens to me who does take care of my daughter?*

*H.: A girl of twenty is afraid because she might be raped. Instead, a woman in her sixties is less in dangerous, it is difficult to be attacked. But it's true, that when I was a student I was not afraid, I went out later, I went to the cinema. One night, at 11.30 o'clock, I and a friend of mine from Somalia we went in a downtown area that was full of young people. At one point we met two young Africans who were friend of us, they told us: "what are you doing? Two women alone at this time! Don't you see that it is dangerous, is full of thugs? We are only two; we cannot defend you against all these guys". Since that time, I have never gone out at night.*

The second topic of collective reflection was the urban space, especially their everyday life sites. It was asked to participants to speak about the locations where they felt at home and where they felt uncomfortable, starting from the consideration that the hostile environment is violent, while a welcoming environment is potentially women friendly.

Mentor interventions returned on the topic of social ties and familiarity to give meaning to the concept of home. In the life of migrant woman home takes inevitably specific variations. Here is why of the train station centrality for Amina. It represents safe place, because it is familiar and because it is the meeting place for diasporic people, where their lives intersect.

*H.: The place is important! If I go to Rome I feel unsafe because I don't know that place, but when I arrive to Padua railway station I feel safe, because I know it, if some-*

*thing happens to me I know where to go. The station is the place where you go when you do not know the city, is the place where you meet your friends. The sense of safety is given by the site.*

On the contrary, un-comfortableness and hostility are feelings associated not only to city areas considered dangerous, but also to places where women with migrant origins do not feel recognized and respected as women with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Here is why the burqa prohibition becomes a symbol of exclusion and in-hospitality even for those who wear other types of veil.

### **9.8.3. Third Question. Violence Against Women and ‘Honour Crimes’: The ‘Honour’ of Whom?**

The seminar had the main objective to interrogate the concept of ‘honour crimes’ together with the course participants. This is a complex subject already addressed in other countries in Europe, like in the Nordic Countries and the UK. In Italy some cases - among others, the murders of Hina Saleem (2006), Sanaa Dafani (2009), Begum Shahnaz (2010) - have only been brought recently to the public attention, where girls and women of migrant origin have either been killed, severely beaten or driven to suicide by close relatives.

These violent practices are often discussed in relation to ‘honour’, in a way that the concept of honour could be seen as a ‘cultural’ problem that belongs to ‘others’. The acts of violence are depicted as deemed remnants of patriarchal and ‘backward’ cultures, often associated to some specific cultural-linguistic backgrounds - from South Asia or North Africa - or religion - Islam. If girls are involved, they are discussed in relation to “two cultures clashes” explanations: they would live in a ‘free’ and ‘equal’ western way, like other ‘normal’ native young girls, but would have to combat the traditional and patriarchal cultural models of their parents refusing to ‘modernise’. So, girls and women of migrant origin are exclusively portrayed as victims and particularly in need of protection from their relatives and groups of origin, characterized as peculiarly oppressive to women.

This entails an inevitable risk of essentializing and masking heterogeneity of subject positions: this inevitably contributes to the reproduction of ethnocentric stereotypes. Little space is offered for the recognition of complexities and in-betweenness of the lived experiences of migrants. These could differ on the basis of gender, class, processes of racialization, rural-urban divisions, belonging to and identification with the origin group, and so on and so forth.

*B.: There is this concept of multiculturalism, I find it very unpleasant. Since I arrived to Italy, they always generalize; you are from Latin America, so everything is the same. On the contrary, we are all different, also among us; now that we started knowing each*

*other, we realized that we are different. All women from East Europe are different and also here in Italy we are all different.*

Migrant women have a multiplicity of contradictory, complex and multifaceted strategies of dealing with the slippery intersection among these differences, which cannot be reduced to a reified and homogeneous discourse on ‘the other’. Understanding violence against women at the intersection of all these dimensions entails the ability to act against it, avoiding polarizations and racist assumptions that could lead to paternalistic interventions and the demonization of particular nationalities and religions.

Most participants are contrary to the use of the term of ‘honour crimes’ and understand these violent practices within the framework of violence against women. They consider that we should take the focus away from any culturally specific label that could be easily hijacked by racists. But at the same time they underline the importance to recognize the specificity of these episodes of violence against women and to draw attention to the different meanings that the term ‘honour’ can have for women than for men, both individually and within the family and the community.

*I.: I also agree that we should not call them honour crimes because they have anything to do with honour. The father who wants to exert his power over the daughter ... I am speaking about the case of the Moroccan girl (Sanaa), as also I am Moroccan ... The girl went to work in the pizzeria: if she worked during the night, why her father was not worried about what she could do until late? Then she went to live with her boyfriend. But her father killed her not because she lived with her boyfriend but because he heard rumours, prejudices of the Moroccan community about him. And honour has nothing to do with this because he kept his honour, not the daughter's honour. Because if he had defended the daughter's honour, he would have gone and speak with this boy to convince him to leave her daughter, this means preserving honour. But when he decided to kill her daughter, he defended his honour.*

“Honour” can be present in many women’s lives, in a negative way but also with positive connotations, and affect their lives in different ways. It can also accompany different forms of violence, as shown in the illustrated cases. So, it is important to facilitate the possibilities for reception of the voices of women who want to speak out about “honour” and the ways they construct and deconstruct this notion.

Thus, the question of ‘honour crimes’ gives the opportunity to reflect about many aspects of the relationship between recognition of differences and violence against women. An adequate analysis encourages action against some forms of violence on women, to move beyond essentialist explanations and an over-focus on practices within migrant groups, Islam, and so on. This is best achieved when women of migrant origin are substantially engaged, so as to be

able to legitimately raise these issues and claim to represent the variety of their experiences.

#### **9.8.4. Fourth Question. Women and Gender Advertisements: “Where Are the Others?”**

During the seminar we tried to discuss on violence against women approaching two apparently ‘easy’ perspectives: some photo advertisements published on Italian newspapers and two Swedish cases relating to the “female dress code” in swimming pools.

Starting from the representation of female body, the lab solicited the discussion between participants about the sexualisation of the body it is represented by the media, but also about self-determination, sexuality, and reciprocal prejudices among different cultures concerning styles of displaying body in the public space. The main objective was to discuss the concepts of male accessibility to female body, of personal freedom, of choice, decency, dignity, modesty and injury.

Through the examples we used, the discussion faced different interpretations on violence against women.

In this seminar, the Lab considered two types of women’s choice in the European public space:

- accessibility to women’s bodies, as represented by the media and gender advertisements;
- inaccessibility of some part of women’s body through the veil or other kinds of clothes.

We wondered if:

- the cases proposed could be considered as possible examples of women’s choice and/or models of symbolic violence, relating to different definitions of ‘modesty line’ by the Lab participants;
- the cases could be considered as relating to male domination or to men’s violence, considering the women body display as “modern” and modesty as “traditional”.

In the first part of the Lab we used some photo-ads published in Italian newspapers and which targeted high and medium class women.

We chose both ads that have been heavily discussed in the Italian feminist public debate because they were perceived as offensive on women or stereotyping gender, and others that, in their banality, allowed thinking on gender roles and apparent gender symmetry in everyday life, as well as on models of gender relations.

Despite the general absence of men in the photos used, during the debate participants discovered gender relations.

As specified to participants, the aim was not to analyze the product made by the advertisers, neither to adopt a marketing approach: we analyzed ads to dis-

cuss on the standard representation of gender roles and on the male accessibility to women's body in the Italian public context.

The objective of this part of the discussion was to find out whether these representations of women, men and gender roles, did relate to social constructions that were conceived as 'violent' for the gazes of women participating in the Lab.

Here, advertising was intended as *sense-making*, defining an ideal style for "modern" women. In a codified, explicit and understandable way, advertisement displays gender differences and it fixes them in models of bodies and gender relations that seem apparently reproducible in everyday life. The observer, nevertheless, is able to produce elaborations and interpretations that might differ both from the author's idea and from the interpretations of other observers. Hence every photo is able to evocate different meaning depending on the subjectivity and context of the observer/consumer.

*C.: Somebody is saying that here I have to see a passive woman that could be take, but I see there is a woman who decide for herself being taken.*

We focused on the theme of women's self-determination on their sexuality considering that sexuality can also be used to affirm one's subjectivity.

From the discussion, different definitions of decency and modesty emerged, as well as different interpretations of what was displayed.

The way women are stereotyped by the media offers diversified models, and not just the "traditional" two: the "typical housewife" and the "temptress". Hence, besides the ads that display the accessibility of women for the man's heterosexual desire, there are other models that show women as active subject of their own life.

In both cases, the models of woman share the same characteristics: young, well-off, pretty, thin, with fair skin. Here, it seems that we have a unique model of woman body.

*S.: This lady we see, she does not represent every woman. She has her own role, in any case. That woman, young, sexy... she cannot represent all the women. Where are the others?*

Also if advertisements seem to adapt at the diversification of the market, the aesthetical canon does offer a hierarchy of bodies: at the top we find a daring, seductive, slim, young, charming body. So, participants discussed on the display of the *desirable* body. We discussed about the discourse on the *beauty* in different contexts and cultures, and particularly on the binary and exclusionary concept of "beauty" and "intelligence" in male-dominated discourse about women. It seems that this dualism is common to many contexts. Could we think about the '*beauty myth*' as a way to socially control women? Or is beauty a real power that can be

used by women in gender relations? The discussion on ads seems to reach the core issue of today feminist thought.

The controversial focus seems to be on the approaches to the ‘modesty line’, which could define, in different ways, the border of personal respect, the personal aesthetic style, or the societal honour in showing the body.

At the beginning, participants agree that every context has its own ‘modesty line’. To explore some different positioning on this line, we analyzed some ads displaying bodies of female children. We discussed on toys for boy and girls, respectively, on the sexualisation of childhood, on maternity models, and on the relation between women body and age as well.

*Y.: The problem is that western women have a strictly idea on the future of their daughters, and they think that the sexy model is the successful one... so they want they little daughters been seductive, attractive as... so they think to offer more opportunities to them. In my country, when I went back on holiday, I saw girls 2 or 4 years old wearing heel, miniskirt.*

*S.: At the other hand, we have old lady dressed as they are teen, I was walking behind a woman, thinking, for the way she dressed, that she was 20 years old. Then, when she turned, I saw her face: she was over 70!*

All the participants agreed against the sexualisation of the body of young girls, but they mark different lines on ‘modesty’, ‘decency’ and ‘shame’, especially relating to the so-called “ elders’ bodies”, though acknowledging that elderly can be pretty as well.

One of the main results of the discussion in the Lab is the finding out of the reciprocal representations that participants have on the ‘others’ habits and their behaviours on the display of body, dressing codes, maternity’s styles, children toys. All these aspects give the opportunity to discuss together on the importance of own habits and on reciprocal prejudices, and also to deconstruct some of them.

Finally, it emerged that the “eye”, intended as the way of looking at, is never a single, “lonely eye”: it is the result of different patterns of social construction and, more interestingly, it is heavily influenced by the others’ “eye” looking at the same object.

The second stage of collective discussion focused the issues challenged by two events which claimed the right to self-determine the dress-code of swimming: on the one hand, the question was about the right to wear ‘burkini’; on the other hand, the claim of some feminist activists to enter swimming pool in topless, as breast are nothing more than muscles. We discovered that a Swedish case relating to the swimming-pool separation is actual present also in Veneto, at Rovigo.

The question was framed both as freedom to be covered, against the lack of social or personal dignity to be undressed, and as freedom to be undressed and



to choose the way to get undress in a context of self-determination and parity with the men.

The core theme was dealt with the articulation of personal choice: as an apparently totally individual act or as an act of dialogue through culture, religion, family or ‘community’.

The debate showed the different perspectives on the “modesty line”, of what is acceptable and not: looking at women clothes, it was possible to reflect on the different definitions of choice, freedom and dignity; these concepts seemed to be shared among participants, even though the meaning assigned to them might differ significantly.

It is important to underline that the word ‘dignity’ was considered by all the women as the most shocking feeling when men’s violence occur to them. Considering the cultural pluralism of the participants, this Lab shows:

- the importance of the reciprocal recognition for a peer-to-peer discussion on the different moral understandings;
- different interpretations of symbolic violence by a gender standpoint, considering different positions on “modesty line”;
- the possibility to find some convergence on the meanings of gender based violence and on the recognition of the men’s violence against women, on the basis of common feeling and experiences on violation of “the dignity of a this or that real woman”;
- the importance and the difficulties to assume a peer-to-peer attitude as Mentor when working with women of different cultural background.

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## 9.9. Welfare System Lab

### Demands and Misunderstandings on the Functioning of Welfare System

The Welfare System Lab was organized mainly by the Municipality of Padua with the aim to promote a dialogue among professionals and women attending the Community Mentor Course and to allow them to know the resources and services provided by the local welfare system and by the Antiviolence Centre of Padua. Participants had also the opportunity to meet professionals and volunteers who are working or worked in the Antiviolence Centre of Modena and Venice, in order to have the possibility to confront the different capabilities and means of each territory for supporting women on situations of gender-based violence.

The opportunity for the participants to meet personally professionals and volunteers and to receive information about the services and provisions available in the city constituted a space to reflect and discuss on the most controversial issues about VAW and migration, and to face some cultural misunderstandings on these issues and other criticalities in the access of the women to the services.

They could share different experiences, rules and perspectives relating to VAW and different ways of acting on VAW. It was also a way to think up the building of a solid and enduring network among people differently involved in

the fields of VAW and migration issues in the context of Padua and of the Veneto.

The first day of the Lab women had a meeting with two members of the Antiviolence Centre of Padua, a social worker of the hospital of Padua, a psychologist of a family planning centre of the health services of Padua and a social worker of the Municipality of Padua.

Professionals presented themselves and the service where they work, describing the kind of problems and difficulties they meet in their daily activities. They concentrated their discussion on the resources and the concrete pathways that can be activated to support a woman who suffered or is at risk of violence. It emerged that professionals agree in the existence of two complementary networks in Padua, naming them “formal” and “informal”, and they tried to explain the meanings of these adjectives. The “formal” network is institutionalized and the head is the prefecture, which works with representatives of local institutions of the State, health and social services, local police and state police, associations and NGOs to take common decisions. At the same time professionals are connected in the informal network, which was constructed in the course of time through the exchange of information, practices of reciprocal support between professionals, volunteers, services and associations during their caring activities and their common training experiences. These complementary networks work at two different levels: there’s a first dimension that essentially concerns the different responsibilities of the authorities, working on the basis of established expertise, then there’s a second level in which the networks work on the basis of the practical functions within the local welfare system and also on the basis of the mutual trust between professionals in the territory of Padua. The construction of the mutual trust is recognized as condition of the effective enforcement of good practices, especially in a period of scarcity of human and economic resources.

Participants showed interest in keeping more information about the Antiviolence Centre of Padua, asking some questions to professionals about the data of women’s accesses to the resources offered by the Centre. To respond at the demands and the information needs from the women taking part at the Course, members of the Antiviolence Centre of Padua talked about their (method of) daily work and the background of the legislatives and politics frame in which they work.

They stressed that the lack of social and economic resources is the central problem they face in their daily activities, and it may impede the general objective of preventing gender-related violence and the practical purpose to construct with the women a concrete pathway to get out of gender-related violence situations. Professionals took as example the fact that in Padua does not exist a women’s secret shelter, a place of temporary refuge and support for women escaping violent or abusive situation, and this is a crucial point, especially because (as the member of Antiviolence Centre of Padua said), *«the most dangerous time for a woman who’s suffering violence is when she decides to get out of that situation»*.

Professionals affirmed that in 2011 about three hundred women got in touch with the Antiviolence Centre of Padua. Regarding migrant women's accesses, professionals explained that there's a majority of women coming from Eastern European countries, with a growing flow of Rumanian women; then they talked about a large number of women of Moroccan origin. These data make them reflect on the actual capability to support women who are suffering or are at risk of violence: there are only four professionals who work in the Antiviolence Centre of Padua.

Since a women's shelter is not available, they try to offer support and protection to the women who address the Centre, acting as intermediary in the contact with other health and social resources and services in the territory of Padua. Professionals recognize the importance of mutual trust relationships between professionals and volunteers co-operating in the gender-based prevention, and work for the strengthening of the networks, both the "formal" one and the "informal" one.

This concept was also underlined in the discourse of the social worker of the Hospital of Padua, when she asserted that she works with women as a "bridge" between the health and social services of the Hospital and Antiviolence Centre of Padua, the state police and the Court. She noticed that professionals operating in the Hospital generally started since there is not too much time to receive training on VAW issues. During the first approach to a training course on gender-based violence, addressed to some professionals of the Hospital of Padua (working in First Aid), she said that some professionals, both doctors and nurses, seemed to be *«terrified regarding VAW issues, and absolutely without preparation on these issues»*.

After the professionals introduced themselves, participants began to raise questions, especially on information and contents of different services and on the expectations of participants as users.

Regarding information about the services in the territory of Padua and considering the anti-violence activities, C. asked:

*I would like to know how you promote your services, because I think that a lot of women do not know your existence.*

H. strengthened this statement, saying:

*I live in a little city near Padua, since 30 years and I didn't know your services. So, now, if a woman, who I suffering violence, asks me for help, which is the first place I have to suggest her to go?*

Professionals described the services provided by institutions that, in principle, have to be available in all municipalities, but they explained also the lack of facilities in some small municipalities and especially the lack of professionals

trained in the field of violence against women. Speakers stressed one more time the importance of friendly networks among professionals, which can balance the lack of facilities.

A discussion rose on the basis of the expectations of participants as users and some misunderstandings in the confrontation between rules, resources and citizens' expectations. «*I would like to know exactly the role of social worker*» is a quite innocent but provocative question, promoted by H. The answer of the social worker of Municipality of Padua, «*the social workers, as public officer, have to guarantee the protection of the woman*», was not able to satisfy her demand because in her personal experience as a “client” she did not feel protection. The “empty space” among what services and professionals are supposed to give and what users expected to receive and the lack of communication and explanations constitute the basis for misunderstandings, maybe increased by reciprocal pre-judices among “native” and migrant women.

T. presented a very serious problem for her future as Mentor: «*how can I/we overcome the fear and diffidence of women who suffer violence?* » This question stimulated a wider reflection on the emotional dimension and the complexity of feelings belonging especially to the women who suffered or are suffering family/domestic and intimate violence. Professionals remembered that women, who suffered or are suffering violence, are afraid of being judge and feel shame. Since talking about violence is related to the intimate sphere and is not easy, the first thing to do consists in supporting women in this process trying to build a relationship based on trust and respect.

In fact, with her question, T., showed to have a doubt regarding her capacity to face a woman who suffered violence, with the fear of not being able to concretely help her. The “fear” is a common feeling both for women attending at the Course and for professionals.

The practical accounts of experiences where professionals and volunteers presented their capacities and their limits were really useful: attendees obtained a real feed-back for their trainings and indications about their possible role of Mentor.

During the second meeting of the Welfare System Lab participants met a police officer, a psychologist working with refugee women and asylum seekers, a psychologist and an educator working in an association which deals with migrant women, and a social worker of an association which deals with women victims of trafficking. At the meeting took part also Antonella Ferrandino, who is responsible of the project Unit for Welcoming and Immigration of the Municipality of Padua and partner of *SPEAK OUT!* project.

As during the first meeting professionals introduced themselves, the service where they work, their role, the difficulties they meet in their daily activity and their experience and knowledge about gender violence.

Since the beginning, professionals stressed the importance of the relationships among different services and workers, they talked about the “formal” and

“informal” network reaffirming what their colleagues said during the previous meeting about the significance of the net. For example, the policewoman talks about her work experience, saying that she receives a lot of requests for help especially from women of migrant origin, and she reflects with them about the possibility to report the violence or she indicates the service that can help them.

Professionals agreed in the need of training for social workers especially about the development of the capacity of listening and of building relationships of trust with women, who suffered or are suffering violence. The psychologist of the family planning centre related her tasks in gender-based violence prevention, working on adolescents, both males and females, usually met in service’s activities.

The discussion among participants and professionals started from the comprehension of the problem of the will dimension, in particular when D. commented:

*I agreed that women have to be supported and they have to be free to decide if they want to report violence or not, but I think that many women do not find this will. So, which is the role of the social worker in building this will?*

During their daily work, professionals aimed at supporting women providing them with comprehension, listening, information, knowledge, suggestions in order to promote their independence. The “*independence*”, the “*autonomy*”, of women were concepts that emerged several times in the words of the speakers, and they were expressed very well by a professional, who said:

*When a woman enters my office I say: I’m here, whatever choice you will do, I’ll support you. I don’t have a solution “ready” for you. The choice is yours.*

In the same sense, another provocative question was moved by S.: «*is it easier to understand a person or to solve a problem?* ». The discussion went around the different ways to support women and give them information that really can help them. Each citizen, and especially women suffering gender violence, has to be supported in deciding the best choice for her. Professionals and the volunteers cannot “solve” women’s problems, but they have to be able to improve their capabilities for supporting the VAW victims and obtaining the best access to women’s resources and services in the local welfare system.

Other participants raised the discussion on women victims of trafficking, in particular on the Italian legislative provisions in this field.

Attendees found very interesting the intervention of the police woman, because she described deeply the process that pushes women to report to the state police the violence suffered.

At the end of the meeting, Antonella Ferrandino spoke about the role of intercultural mediators belonging to Municipality of Padua, and the training courses provided by the Municipality of Padua in order to develop their capabilities in

VAW and migration issues, not only concerning their translation capacity. Furthermore, she answered to a question moved by Y. regarding the possibility to do some internship within the health and social services of the Municipality of Padua.

Professionals stressed again the importance of the network among services and workers and they agreed in involving in this network in the near future also Community Mentor.

The two meetings of the Welfare System Lab were very useful for participants. They were particularly interesting to get in touch with different services and associations, but they were also aware of an existing distance among “native” professionals and migrant women.

Professionals rule the part of the institutions, but they stressed the attention also on the “human” aspect of their job; on the other hand participants -as many other citizens- are divided into the will in trusting in the capacities of professionals and the refusal of the welfare bureaucracy.

Although the misunderstandings and doubts these meetings permitted participants and professionals to have an initial contact and to add a new small piece at the existing “informal” network.

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## 9.10. Rights and Legislation Lab

The Laboratory Rights and Legislation was the fourth Lab, preceded by Beads&Words, Controversial Issues and Welfare System. This Lab carried on the interventions of the 2nd and 3rd Discussion Groups about the general legal framework on immigration, asylum and refugee status, women’s rights and contrasting VAW.

In the open meetings, many questions were raised by the attendees, related to their personal experiences but also to the role of the Mentor: for these reasons this last Lab involved the law's practice from the gender point of view.

Three feminist lawyers contributed to the Lab Rights and Legislation: they are very accomplished professionals in criminal, family and work law, and they have been working with the feminist lawyers for the Italian network and for the Anti-Violence Centre of Venice for about forty years. In the 70s in Venice, they were among the founders of the association "Tribunale 8 marzo" (8<sup>th</sup> March Court), one of the first groups of feminist lawyers.

Being aware of the need to avoid institutional violence (discrimination and rights denied) on the interpersonal violence suffered (at home, at work, on the street) by women, we can say that this Lab has been a valuable self-help tool, because it was built together with the attendees, as women who want to be Mentors of Community.

The lawyers, after a brief self-presentation, explained the main ways in which the Italian law could contribute to the path VAW-rights-Mentor from a protective viewpoint. They were given suggestions on strategies to be put in place, through examples and case studies, presented by the lawyers but also suggested by the attendees themselves, which have shown a great interest and participation concerning personal situations, for which they have asked for and received information. Interesting, in this regard, was to see how some of the attendees, stimulated by the discussion, also had the ability to imagine cases that were beyond their experience or people close to them, taking advantage of the lawyers' expertise and thus acquiring some knowledge for the role that a Mentor plays.

The possibility of empowerment of women who have experienced violence and who can count on the figure of the Mentor also passes through the knowledge of legal instruments presented by the lawyers. It is easier to get out of a history of violence, if the victim is conscious on the possibility of an effective protection of rights and about the existence of helpful services that can listen and give a concrete help (first of all the Anti-Violence Centre).

Knowing the Italian law also means having more power to self-determine facts, understand if people are victims of discrimination or of other unlawful attitudes that, if reported, are punished for their non-compliance with the law. Sometimes making a report can lead to the possibility of the regularization of a status as established by art. 18 1998 Immigration Consolidated Act and by the extension of his application stated by the European Directive 2009/52/EC transposed in the Italian legal frame in July 2012.

Women exposed to VAW are often those without social networks, economically dependent by their husband (they arrived in Italy through family reunions), living in multi-problematic families: the relational approach that is weak or denied to them in the country of emigration can be returned through the knowledge of the existence of bottom up networks and through the possibility to turn



without fear to gender oriented professionals (as the lawyer that deals with the VAW as the Mentor who knows how to move on the field of rights protection and of city's services).

Despite the persistence of intra-gender inequality, during the Lab it has emerged that the Italian law can potentially offer protection to also non-native women, especially if they are supported by a women network, and by gender oriented experts, women and men. These possibilities should be transmitted to women suffering violence or at risk, but also in the everyday life contexts of the attendees in order to sustain women's capacity to handle the situation and to get them out of violence.

## **Dialogue with a Lawyer on VAW and Stalking in Intimate Relationship Self-Presentation**

*I am Annamaria Marin, a criminal lawyer, member of the Board of Directors of the Criminal Chamber of Venice. I deal with violence against women, also in the training of criminal lawyers in Venice. I am a consultant of the Venice Anti-Violence Centre and voluntary of the association "Pink Line" (Telefono Rosa) in Treviso. Through my job I try to achieve daily the best judicial procedure to protect women. First of all, I would to say to a Mentor how important is to provide a suitable welcome to women who suffered violence, and to have the ability to keep from her information that enables us to develop appropriate interventions in order to protect her.*

## **Recognizing Violence against Women: Domestic Violence**

It is often a subtle violence, with behaviours that can be dangerous for intensity, frequency, specific subjective and objective conditions. The difficulties and the differences in the intervention are connected to the ambivalence of family relations (affection & conflict). An advice to a Mentor:

*Give voice to the silence and offer life alternatives to the fear proposing outlooks to contrast the paralysis caused by family violence and tools to be used in order to gain valid answers.*

## **Family Violence: When the Author Is the Partner**

If there are minor children, you should check if they are not involved in the violence, or if they are viewers of it (so called witnessed violence) and for this reason they become victims. In these two cases, in order to protect women (and her children), the responses at the operational level are different, as the consequences and the implications of a criminal report are different.

## **Sexual Violence**

The 1996 Italian Law against sexual violence introduced the article 609bis and following in the criminal code. “Sexual violence” is related to all the non-accepted “sexual acts” imposed on a woman. The main principle of this law is the centrality of the woman’s self-determination, choice and will. As general principle the norm stated that only the victim could decide if addressing a legal action to the police and the court, except in specific circumstances (see below).

### **Persecution Acts (“Stalking”) – art. 612 bis Criminal Code**

The stalker is a person, who intentionally, repeatedly, insistently and permanently persecutes. These behaviours become a criminal offense if they persist through time and in number and if the woman who is the victim experiences a “persistent and serious state of “anxiety” or a well-founded fear for her safety or the safety of the people close to her, or if she is forced to change her daily routine.

The law provides warnings with a deterrent function, on behalf of the police and regardless of a complaint. The police must address the woman to an Anti-violence Centre. It is the first time that a Law recognizes an expertise to Anti-violence Centres. If the woman reports the offences, precautionary measures against the stalker can be requested and implemented before the trial. If together with the criminal event, other procedures relating to separation of spouses or children of the couple are also connected also the civil and juvenile courts will intervene and not only the criminal court.

### **Non-Domestic Violence: From the so Called “Less Serious” Cases to Gang Rape**

The victim is afraid to report violence, because she fears she is not going to be believed, she fears to have to deal with the trial, of what will happen after in the family and in her daily life. The task of a Mentor, therefore, is to ensure that every judicial process is activated in a conscious way by the woman, who, will count on the continued support of the Mentor. Often in police headquarter or stations women cannot find the same information and opportunities that could receive from an anti-violence expert.

Considering migration and VAW it is important to stress that art. 18 of 1998 Consolidated Act on Immigration provides the possibility of the residence permit for humanitarian reasons to women/people who decide to get out of forced prostitution and who are at risk of serious repercussions on their person or family, through a “judicial” or “social” path (with/without report her exploiters).

## Debate During the Laboratory: The “Security” Issue from a Gender Perspective

The Mentor must know how to deal with dangerous situations for women. Must know how to use different social practices and must support women in the judicial protection of rights. Both the consequences of the violence and the difficult situations relating to the judicial phase should be considered.

The Mentor must be able to give to the woman, who suffered violence, all the information to access to more qualified social services, as the Anti-violence Centre or services of family planning or territorial social services. Police, health and social services are all key collectors of information that can give voice to situations of violence at the moment of the fall of the wall of silence”.

### The Access to Health Services, Police and Judicial System. Which Routes, Which Possible Consequences

First of all it’s always recommended to send a woman, who suffered violence, to an Anti-violence Centre. A woman who suffered violence should be accompanied or sent to the local services or to the police by a woman working at the Anti-violence Centre or by a trusted person.

**The relationship with health services.** *“We must always suggest to the woman who suffered violence to go to the first aid or to her doctor as soon as possible, where the “evidence” of the offense can be acquired through a medical report and in order to protect her mental and physical health”*

**Be aware:** *“Only the woman’s will, expressed through a legal action, may lead to a criminal trial. At the hospital, the woman can find help also through the internal social service to decide what to do. In case of reiteration of the injuries in different days, and/or in case of a plurality of accesses to the First aid, can be put in place a procedure “ex officio” by the police. This reveals heavier sanctions for the author of violence.*

**Be aware:”** *although the medical report says “to judicial authority”, the woman may choose to leave anonymous the author of the lesions. In this case, if the medical prognosis is less than 20 days, the court cannot deal with the event. But if there are many medical certificates, even if the author has remained anonymous and even if each episode was not reported, those certificates could be valued in a civil (in a case of separation) or criminal branch (crime of abuse in the family, because injuries are repeated)”.*

### Critical Tangles in the Relationship with the Police

Not all the police stations provide specialized female officers to receive women who suffered violence. The obligation to recruit female police officers is expected only in the case of invasive interventions on a woman’s body. Not always the woman meets only one interlocutor; therefore she has to repeat her story of violence to different people.

## Relevant Aspects of Access to the Judicial System

It is important that a Mentor:

*learns about the competencies of the different judicial authorities, supports the woman in the obstacles of the legal action, with the awareness that a same oversight (including, when it is appropriate, different lawyers) may allow a better result, avoiding partial or contrasting readings, that might affect the path of independence and freedom from violence.*

Admissibility: only the decision of the victim can start the criminal trial. The complaint must be made within 3 months after the fact (6 months in the case of sexual violence or stalking). The injured person can withdraw the legal action before the process is defined, but this is not possible in the case of sexual violence (in order to avoid any external pressure on the will of the woman and protect the collective interest of the surfacing of violence).

*If the woman, who suffered violence, has a medical prognosis of less than 20 days, the victim has to decide whether to propose legal action or not, but if the prognosis is more than 20 days, the report is required with “ex officio” admissibility.*

In case of a report in a police station, the record is forwarded to the Public Prosecutor (PP), who represents the State in defence of a crime victim. You can refer to the PP only through a lawyer.

*In order to better develop inquiries and trial is very important that the PP has available all the information possible about the violence. For a more effective defence in the trial is also required the presence of a lawyer, through the victim may also bring a civil action (achieving the right to define the application of condemnation and damages). The Mentor must inform women who are victims of violence on the right to free sponsorship. In fact, in situations of economic weakness it not should happen that a woman gives up the possibility to have a lawyer.*

Access to free legal aid is provided to the victim under the Law on sexual violence, even irrespective of income conditions. For other types of crime, the victim can use the free legal aid only if her income is below the threshold of € 10,766.33 (considering the total family income). In cases of domestic & family violence does not operate the mechanism of aggregation of income between spouses.

To support a woman in a criminal trial a Mentor must know the more significant and frequent institutions and mechanisms.

Precautionary measures are aimed at protecting the victim and the community and can be applied between the report and the trial, thus before the affirmation of criminal responsibility with the final sentence. As a precondition to precautionary measures there must be serious indications of guilty and specific

precautionary reasons (risk of re-offending, of tampering of evidences and escape). Typical precautionary measures are a removal of the author of violence from the family home or a restraining order to the places of life of the victim. In case of violation of the precautionary measures follows the worsening of the provision until the restriction in prison. Precautionary measures are temporary, and they cease if the trial is not celebrated in quick times, and may be revoked if later the offender shows regret.

The process of taking evidence is situated between the victim's report and the trial ("pre-trial stage"). The woman may be asked to tell what suffered, in a courtroom, in presence of the investigating judge, the prosecutor, the lawyer, and the author of crime. *«The situation is very important, because in the trial for violence the woman is key witness and may be difficult for her psychologically and emotionally support the story of violence».*

Preliminary investigations: in Italy usually the time between the fact and the opening of the trial is long. *«The woman should be supported in the difficulties to the reconstruction of the facts as "complete" as possible, in particular to face the oral cross-examination of the lawyer of the accused who could try to invalidate her whole story of violence».*

Jurisdiction of different Courts. Especially in cases of domestic & family violence there may be overlapping of different authorities: for example, the Civil Court for the separation of the spouses, the Juvenile Court for the events relating to children, the Criminal Court for issues related to violence.

The trial. In the preliminary investigation stage, the victim may appoint a defence lawyer, which may usefully complement the PP for better prosecution. During the criminal trial, the woman may exercise the right to bring a civil action to be supported by her lawyer in the courtroom.

When the trial finishes, if the accused has no criminal record and the sentence imposed is less than two years of detention, may be granted suspended sentence, only if the person convicted, in the subsequent five years, do not commit further crimes. Who has been convicted for sexual crimes cannot avoid prison and the judgment is irrevocable. During the detention may be required alternative measures (in Italian legal order they may be allowed by the judiciary surveillance after the permanence of at least one year in jail and if the risk of recidivism has been ruled out).

## **Dialogue with a Lawyer in the Family Law Laboratory**

### **Self-Presentation**

*I'm Francesca Maggiolo, a lawyer in Venice and legal consultant of the Anti-Violence Centre. I deal with gender related issues and family law. The family constitutes the central nucleus of the society and it is the place where culture is preserved and transmitted by parents to children. This is an aspect that a good Mentor can't forget and underestimate in order to support women, who asked her for help and support.*

## Family Legal Issues

During this Lab were presented several examples of problematic family legal issues that a Mentor can face in supporting women who suffered or are suffering violence:

- both spouses are Italian;
- spouses married abroad with the same foreign nationality;
- spouses married in Italy with the same foreign nationality;

Within the “so called” mixed marriages:

- an Italian and a foreigner who got married in Italy;
- an Italian and a foreigner who got married abroad;
- two foreigners of different nationalities who got married in Italy;
- two foreigners of different nationalities who got married abroad.

**Be aware:** in these different situations the Italian law cannot always be applied, as for instance it’s not possible to apply the Italian law for the couples that have their official residence in different places or in different countries.

*A good Mentor has to suggest to women to have all the documents related to the marriage and their family members; to register also in Italy and especially in the municipality where they live the marriage that took place in the foreign country; to know the owner of the house where the couple and their children live.*

Different forms of marriage in Italy were illustrated and participants told about the uses and tradition about wedding in their country (religious or civil). An attendee asked if a marriage celebrated abroad has civic relevance in Italy, and related with that counts *«the general principle that is valid only if it was celebrated in the form recognized as valid in the state where it was celebrated»*.

During the Lab it was highlighted that Italian State doesn’t recognize common law couples. L. from Kenya was amazed with it, because on the basis of her information in Kenya *«if you live together for at least 5 years, the law considers you as a married couple in the recognition of the rights/duties»*.

## The Debate: In the Case of Separation

Who can turn to the Italian Judge and apply for separation and divorce in Italy?

- Spouses resident or people that have been regularly living in Italy for many years
- people not resident in Italy but married in Italy
- people who married abroad but registered the marriage in Italy
- people who come from a country where separation or divorce are not legal.

Anyway, when the intention is to proceed with a separation or a divorce, the suggestion is to contact a lawyer and provide as much information as possible about the case.

**Be aware:** free legal aid involves also foreigners: for any cause, including separation and divorce, you can be assisted by a lawyer who will be paid by the Italian State if you have an income lower than that prescribed by law (currently € 10,766.33).

Which is the Law applicable by the Italian Judge? It depends by the situation.

- A) The law of the origin State: *«Mentor should suggest to women that is supporting to collect information and become familiar with the law of the country where she married (especially on alimony, reliance children etc.)»*. Otherwise the Mentor can herself obtain these information.
- B) The Italian law. If the marriage was celebrated in Italy and spouses' residence is in Italy. If the spouses have dual citizenship and one is Italian: judge can apply the Italian law, unless the foreign law is more favourable (both spouses agree to apply).
- C) the law indicated by the spouses.

## Children in Separation

*«The principle that regulates this situation is that the child must be protected, and his interest and well-being are prevalent».*

The Court competent to deal with it is the Court where the parents are separating or divorcing, or the Juvenile Court of the place where the child lives. In Italy there exists the institution of shared foster care and by law, parents must both take financially care of their children until they are not economically independent.

Be aware: it would certainly be favourable for foreign women and her children to convince her husband to adjust their marriage- and therefore separation or divorce- by Italian law, even if marriage took place in a foreign country.

Participants asked questions about citizenship of foreign residents' children: *«in Italy the child has Italian citizenship if one of the parents is Italian, wherever she/he was born»*, replied Maggiolo, remembering that in Italy is in force the principle of nationality law *ius sanguinis*.

If situations require immediate action, be aware: in these cases the Italian judge that will apply Italian Law is always competent.

Protection orders and other precautionary measures can be adopted also by the Civil Judge and *«it is important to highlight that these measures are applicable to anyone of any nationality, who is guilty of violent conduct»*.

## Children in an Emergency Situation

In a situation of emergency (even in the case of witnessed violence), where children are minor, the Juvenile Court is the competent Court. It's not important if parents are married or not, if they are Italian or foreigners.

*«A good Mentor has to know that victim's pain is a central issue for anti-violence women's agency. Women frequently do not tell the difficult conditions in which they live, because they are afraid of losing their residence permit or because they fear that their children will be taken away (often are threatened by husbands and partners and sometimes by the social services). Related to the emergency situation, a good Mentor has to stress with victims of violence that it is unfounded the fear of losing their children because you have no money. If it's only an economic problem the Italian social system will support you».*

## Dialogue with a Lawyer on Work Legislation

### Self-Presentation

*I'm Chiara Santi, a lawyer. Since many years I deal with women, in relation to violence and labour law and trade union, and the relationships between these two areas. A Mentor, who deals with the theme "work", should always have in mind the job, since it is essential in the design and implementation of the personality. Labour law concerns aspects of our daily private life but also aspects under State jurisdiction. The work appears in the first article of the Italian Constitution within the fundamental principles ("Italy is a democratic Republic founded on labour"). Even foreign, who works in Italy has the right of access to the Italian judge and to invoke our legislation, taking priority the public interest of protection of any person who works in the Italian territory.*

### Chronological References on Italian Legislation on Work from a Gender Perspective

The following laws are the result of social struggles and they represent a progressive implementation of general principles stated in the Constitution.

- L. 7/1963: Prohibition of dismissal of women workers because of marriage.

**Be aware:** until today we could find the practice of "blank resignations" as an early form of blackmail in the event of a future pregnancy

- L. 300/1970: Workers' Statute. The Article 18 states the right to reinstatement for workers dismissed with unjustified cause and the payment of salaries match (in companies with more than 16 employees).

**Be aware:** Art. 18 is a stop to illegal dismissals and guarantee the witnesses in legal action of discriminatory dismissals.

- L. 1204/1971 Compulsory Maternal Leave for 5 months maintaining at least 80% of the salary for the employees women.



**Be aware:** the recent implementation is relating to some days of paternal leave (1+5 days) and to the principle relating to the parenthood rights recognizing the right of the child (natural or adopted) to maintain the relationship with his parents. Recently in Venice a woman judge recognized to a husband the right of leave for the purpose of nursing while his wife took care of the home.

- L. 53/2000 Regulations to support maternity and paternity, the right to care and training and urban planning's coordination.

**Be aware:** new typologies of organization on workplaces are experimented through funding to companies with flexible management schedules, to allow the re-reconciliation work, caring after the children and family life.

- L. 546/1987 Maternity allowance for self-employed women.
- L. 379/1990 Maternity allowance for freelance professional women.
- L. 125/1991 Positive actions for the realization of gender equality in employment, modified by legislative decree n. 196/2000 promoting Equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women .
- L. 53/2000 Maternity and Paternity in the working places and extension of protection from maternity to parenthood.
- Cost. L. 1/2003 modifies art. 51 of the Constitution and introduces the concept of positive actions (gender equality, access to outlets and elected positions, the so-called “pink quotas”).

One of the most important laws is n. 903/1977 on Equal treatment between men and women in employment (implementation of art. 37 Cost.). This law is oriented to play out programs and positive actions for equal opportunities against explicit and implicit gender based discriminations.

This law introduced a very important procedural instrument relating to the burden of proof, now placed on the subject who commits the discrimination. An example: on ten employees hired at the same time with the same contract, an employer renewed the contract to nine men but not to the only woman. In the trial the employer was charged for discrimination”.

The Municipality of Venice published a competition for working in Local Police: within the requirements there was the minimum height of 1.70 m (in the majority of cases that means to be a man). This criterion was considered discriminatory and for this reason modified.

## **Main Questions During the Debate**

Despite the existence of these laws, can we state that there exists gender equality in employment? There is really equal pay for men and women? YES, if we consider the same qualifications, but equally qualified men and women are not recognized in the same way. NO, even if the wages are the same at the same job's level, women and men are usually framed at different levels while performing the same work.

## Other Elements Weakening Women in the Labour Market

*«The gender segregation is very dangerous for women, especially because the low contractual levels (as the professional services and care, or productive sectors with low technology) are strictly feminine. Moreover, even in the North East of Italy endures women's presence in the black economy and the participation of women in professional Unions is scanty».*

For migrant's women there is the risk of sexual blackmails when they need to renovate job's contract in order to obtain the renewal of residence permit. In fact, only those who have a residence permit may apply for regularization of employment.

Conclusive remark: *«De facto guarantees are not the same for all, but only for those who have the effective capacity to apply to a judge. Moreover, the caring work for their family influences a lot on career and professional choices of women».*

### A Case to Reflect on

A case to reflect on relating to several elements considered in the Lab. It's about an Italian girl who works like a waitress during summertime. The contract contains a double, illegal, "training period". Before she was obliged to work off the books, to evaluate her, then the employer pretends another training period when she was regularly employed. After 15 days, she signed the contract that provides a one month training period. After a short time, she realizes to be pregnant and communicates it to the employer, who dismissed her for "unsuccessful training period". Her rights of working mother have been denied. The whole legal action was based on witnesses, who had to prove that she had started working 10 days before the date written on the contract. The depositions in support of the girl were very precise and agree with each other, even if her colleagues went to testify against her because they weren't protected by art. 18 of the Workers' Statute.

The legislation related to working mothers provides that a woman cannot be dismissed from the moment she was pregnant until a year after the child's birth. Because dismissal was considered void by the court, the woman received her salary from the moment she was turned away until the child was one year old.

At the end of the Lab, the lawyer illustrates some useful public and private institutions: *«the Mentor will know them and let them know, as useful reference for everything related to the world of work».*

Public institutions are the Provincial Labour Directorate, the Labour Inspectorate, the National Institute of Social Insurance (INPS) and the National Institute of Work Accidents (INAIL). Private institutions are Unions of different inspirations and Centres for Fiscal Assistance (CAF). In some Unions there are specialized offices dedicated to foreigners.

Several questions were raised by the Lab participants on this topic. The lawyer explains that the union can take on even people without Italian citizen-

ship (as mediators, translators, consultants etc.). The contribution of foreign trade unionists was crucial in situations where foreign labour is the majority, for instance where there are big tenders. In this field is frequent the simulation of cooperative agreements, where those who appear as “partner” is actually dependent. The translators are very useful to explain to the workers of different nationality and language the difference between the two types of work situation and contracts.

## SUMMARY. The Italian Legislative Framework

### The Italian Constitution

The articles 1, 2 and 3 of the Italian Constitution provide some fundamental principles relating to the recognition of “the inviolable rights of the person, both as an individual and in the social groups where human personality is expressed”(art.2). In accordance with this philosophical approach, the Charter declares the equality as citizenship criterion but also contains the rights to own difference as landmark against any type of discrimination relating to “distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, personal and social conditions”(art. 3). Moreover the Charter indicates a compulsory implementation perspective, because “It is the duty of the Republic to remove those obstacles of an economic or social nature which constrain the freedom and equality of citizens, thereby impeding the full development of the human person and the effective participation of all workers in the political, economic and social organization of the country” (art. 3).

Since the beginning of the Republic - especially during the 60s in the field of work and during the 70s/90s in the fields of family, sexuality, health, reproduction, abortion, and violence against women - the implementation of Charter principles were crucial for changes of many patriarchal and discriminatory aspects in the whole legislation, at the national, regional and local level. At the institutional level, an increasing autonomy has been recognized to Local Authorities, especially to Regions and some provinces further to constitutional amendments to the Title V of the Italian Constitution, in 2001. It is important to note the changes that took place in 2001 on the Charter with the article 51 (women’s political participation).

Considering the status of the migrants, the Charter allows them –also those with irregular status- free healthcare almost in the emergency rooms (art.32). Recently, in 2010, the Italian Constitutional Court (judgment no. 249/2010) stated that the inviolable rights (pursuant to art. 2 of the Constitution) belong to “*individuals, not as participants in a particular political community, but as human beings*”. As consequence “*the legal status of foreigners cannot and should not be considered as eligible cause of diversified and worsening treatments, especially in the area of criminal law*”. This declaration nullifies the so-called aggravating circumstance of migrants’ irregular stay in the Italian territory was defined by the 2009 Law on public security.

Nevertheless the principle stated by the Court seems to constitute a criterion that could be applied to the whole population present in the territory in many other situations.

Migrants' admission in Italy is regulated under the Consolidated Act regarding the provisions governing immigration and regulations concerning the status of foreigners adopted through Legislative Decree 286/1998, with its more recent changes (the most important in 2002 and 2009). The actual legislation links very strictly the residence permit with an employment contract, limits the circumstances for mixed marriages and for family reunions. The Law No. 94/2009 criminalizes irregular migration, transforming it from an administrative offense to a criminal offense. As a crime punished *ex officio*, some public officials and public service agents, excluding those in the health and education sectors, are mandated to provide information on irregular migration. The immigration law is still based on *ius sanguinis* despite many children of migrants are born in Italy. In 2009 the Law stated also the extension of permanence in CIE from 40 to 180 days: in these Centres of Identification and Deportation, detention of migrants is not relating to criminal offences but in order to allow identity check before a possible deportation.

Considering gender, migration and VAW it is important to stress that the art. 18 of 1998 Consolidated Act on immigration provides for the possibility of residence permit for humanitarian reasons to women/people who decide to get out of forced prostitution. It is possible through a “judicial” (report of the exploiters) and a “social” (without report) path for women at risk of serious repercussions on their person or family back home. According to the Social Protection stated by art. 18 and the Sheltered Accommodation (art. 13 of 2003 Measures against the traffic on human beings) the residence permit for humanitarian reasons could be applied also to men and women victims of trafficking and serious sexual exploitation, exploited at work, in mendicancy, in illegal economies, with particular attention to children and transgenders. Law no. 228/2003 against human trafficking introduced the offence of reducing a person to or keeping him/her in slavery or servitude, trafficking in persons and trading in slaves.

Since 2012 the residence permit for humanitarian reasons pursuant to art. 18 of 1998 Consolidated Act can be applied to any irregular worker suffering serious labor exploitation who reports his employer.

Although Italian Constitution affirms a very generous principle of the right of asylum (art.10), in Italy doesn't exist an organic law that regulates it, thus the international protection is regulated only under the Immigration laws (1990, Abolition of geographic reserve of Geneva's Convention; 2001, creation of SPRAR - System of protection for asylum seekers and refugees; 2002, creation of Territorial Commissions for evaluation of asylum's applications; 2007, 7 March and 11 April, Directives of Interior Minister on unaccompanied asylum seeking children). In Europe, the most serious cases of institutional violation of

the right of asylum occur with the practices of rejections at the borders, which concern also Italy. In 2012 the European Court of Human Rights established responsibility of Italy in torture and inhumane treatments suffered by migrants deported to Libya (*Hirsi Jamaa and Others v. Italy*).

Regarding legislation on VAW, the Court of Cassation in 1976 for the first time punished the “marital rape”. The Parliament in 1958 established the crime of exploitation of prostitution, assuming until now an abolitionist approach on this topic. The 1996 Italian Law against sexual violence classified the sexual violence as a crime against the person (specifically against “the personal freedom”), whereas previously the Italian Criminal code defined it as an offence against “public morality and decency”. It should be stressed that in the Italian law the recognition of woman’s will come to expect that even rape could be prosecuted only on victim’s report. The ex -officio prosecution is compulsory only where the medical prognosis is more than 20 days, when the victim is a minor and according to worsening circumstances. The relevance of victim’s will is a principle required at the time by the Feminist Movement, and all the Italian feminist lawyers and experts on gender based violence argued until now on this principle.

The 1998 Law n. 269 on Provisions against the exploitation of prostitution, pornography, sexual tourism involving children, contains first modifications of 1996 Law against sexual violence on the above issues.

In 2001 Law on Measures against Violence in Family Relations - recognizing a larger definition of family as possible context of VAW and against children-deals with the separation of the violent relative from the family, through civil or penal legal actions (so called “protection orders”).

In 2006 passed a Law on Measures of prevention and prohibition of any female genital mutilation practice. Italy passed a specific Law against stalking in 2009, introducing a new article in the existing Criminal code, making *stalking* a criminal offence.

From 2006 to 2009, the last new legal dispositions on VAW (as stalking and la *detenzione obbligatoria per gli atti di violenza sessuale*) – also related to the increasing of punishments - have been inserted in Laws on public security, that regulate mainly migrations.

## Some Positive and Negative Remarks

Regarding to the implementation of Anti-violence policy at the administrative and local level, especially through the main Municipalities, the Italian Government, Department for Equal Opportunity, in 1998-2006 launched the project entitled “Anti-violence network between the Italian Urban cities”, following a project design of the Venice Municipality. Thanks to the innovative methodology used by the project, it was possible for the first time to bring out at the national level what is the perception of violence and stereotypes that still justify it in various territorial areas. In 2006 it began the activities of the project ARIAN-

NA (National Anti-Violence Network). The project sustained the work of the National Network of Anti-Violence Centres creating a toll free number 1522, a public service conceived to listen and support women victims of violence. Currently, the pilot places connected with 1522 number are the cities of Bologna, Palermo, Naples, Venice, Pescara, Prato, Cosenza, Isernia, Trieste, Ravenna, Nuoro, Potenza, Aosta, Turin, Latina, Agrigento, and the provinces of Genoa, Ancona, Bari, Catania, Caserta and the Autonomous Province of Bolzano. In these territories it was prepared a system for the direct access to local services, even in cases of emergency, as conveyed by telephone reception service 1522 (this includes a direct transfer of the call, from the call centre to the anti-violence centre being active on the opening hours to public). The 1522 is available every day for 24 hours a day and is accessible by the entire national territory free from both fixed and mobile phones, with reception available in Italian, English, French, Spanish and Arabic. In 2007-2010 the Italian Government, Department for Equal Opportunity launched a Programme on DUG (Gender Human Rights) to support local projects relating to the training activities on VAW.

Between 1999 to 2007 were presented (but not discussed) to the Parliament some law proposals on the recognition (with financial resources) of the public role of the Anti-violence Centers (Serafini, 1999, Bimbi 2007).

In findings of the *UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences*, following her visit to Italy from 15 to 26 January 2012, show the necessity to improve the status of women also regarding MRM one's. The report is consistent with some of the Concluding Observations by CEDAW in July 2011 on the “*lack of data on violence against immigrant, Roma and Sinti women and girls*”, “*about the high number of women murdered by their partner or ex-partner*”, and because “*a gender-sensitive approach has not been mainstreamed throughout the process of granting asylum/refugee status*”. In her report the *UN Special Rapporteur did not give any mention to the Projects on Violence Against Migrant Women coordinated by Italian Teams and co-financed in the Daphne III Programme*.

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## 9.11. Public Seminars

12.17.2011

“Good practices and gender sensitive approaches to women’ empowerment in Europe: Madrid, Helsinki and London.”

- Franca Bimbi (University of Padua)
- Bakea Alonso (Cepaim, Madrid)
- Andrès Arias (Universidad Complutense, Madrid)
- Aino Saarinen (University of Helsinki, Helsinki)
- Kaarina Aitamurto (University of Helsinki, Helsinki)
- Ida Jarnila (Monika Ngo, Helsinki)
- Pragna Patel (Southhall Black Sisters, London)

06.15-16.2012

“Violence against women”. Questions on “the others and us”.

On 16 June: awarding to participants of the Community Mentor Course of a Certificate of attendance.

- Franca Bimbi (University of Padua)
- Linda L. Sabbadini (Istat)
- Franca Balsamo (University of Turin)
- Alisa Del Re (CIRSPG-University of Padua)
- Maura Misiti (Cnr)
- Sara Cavallaro (Fondazione Basaglia)
- Alberta Basaglia (Fondazione Basaglia)
- Barbara Bertolani (University of Molise)
- Natalya Lyamkina (Anti-violence centre, Modena)
- Nadine Esthel Fomen (Anti-violence centre, Modena)
- Tiziana Dal Pra (Trama di Terre association)
- Reading of the short-stories written by participants at the Community Mentor Course.
- Presentation of the Certificate of Attendance to participants at the Community Mentor Course by:
  - Daniela Ruffini (President of the City Council of the Municipality of Padua)
  - Franca Bimbi
  - Antonella Ferrandino
  - Alberta Basaglia
- Closing event: A story a little bit magic, theatrical performance by Sonia Bergamasco.





The Italian team organized two Public Seminars. The first Public Seminar was held on Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> December 2011 and the title of the Seminar was “Good practice and gender sensitive approaches to women’s empowerment in Madrid, Helsinki and London”. At the seminar took part around fifty people. It was the closing event of the Group Discussions and the idea of Community Mentor profile was present to the participants.

At the meeting attended as experts our partners from Cepaim (Madrid), from University of Helsinki and from Monika (Helsinki). Moreover Pragna Patel from Southall Black Sisters, London participated.

Attendees were very satisfied with the meeting. For the first time in their life they could get in touch with public activities against gender based violence and good practices organized by other migrant women around Europe. After that Pragna Patel described the story of Southall Black Sisters participants began to ask questions about that Ngo, because they were thinking over creating a similar activity in Padua. Considering Monika and Southall Black Sisters experiences the Community Mentor profile looks at a possibility also to us.

The second Public Seminar was held on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2012 and the title of the Seminar was “Violence against women. Questions on “the others and us”. It was the official closing event of the Laboratories path. During the two days the participants of the Community Mentor’s Course read their short stories (products of the Beads&Words Laboratory) and presented the *Charter for the Community Mentor against Violence on Women*.

On Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> they received the Certificate of attendance at the Course. At the Seminar took part around 60 people.

## 9.12. Evaluation and Self-Evaluation

### Challenges and Successes

The main goal of *SPEAK OUT!* project was to support migrant, refugee and ethnic minority women to improve their personal abilities and capabilities in order to find individual as well as collective ways to prevent and combat any form of gender-violence in the everyday life of the city, communities, neighbourhood and families. During the laboratories of the “Course for Community Mentor to Prevent and Contrast Violence Against Women” women improved their capabilities, in order to support women victims of violence, obtain the best access to women’s rights resources in the local welfare system, establish and compel gender respectful relationships and act to overcome racial and cultural prejudices.

The realization of the Course for Community Mentor was characterized by challenges and successes.

## Challenges

Many women had difficulties to attend regularly because of their work. Some participants began to attend the Course, but then they had to leave it.

Some women had difficulties to attend regularly the Course for family reasons. Women with little children could not participate all day long at the meetings and the organization could not arrange a childcare service. An undocumented migrant woman wanted to take part at the Course, but we could not admit her.

Some asylum seekers began to attend the Course, but then they left it and we hadn't news about them. We would like to involve Roma women in the project and for this purpose we had a focus group with professionals working with Roma people, but unfortunately it did not succeed.

## Success

Comparisons and discussions among women with different migrant and cultural background. At the beginning of the Course participants had the tendency to talk with women with the same nationalities, at the end they talked to each other and nationalities were simple adjectives. Some of them decided to write an autobiographical tale together.

We (trainers and organizers of the course) worked to overcome our ethnocentric stereotypes. During the first meetings we identified participants with their nationalities or on the basis of their somatic traits and we considered them prevalently as migrants. During this path and process we started to identify them with their name and we began to think of them as citizens living in the same territory as us, in particular we considered them from the point of view of their rights and their access at the welfare resources and at the possibility of acting together to contrast VAW.

The feminist approach of peer-to-peer relationship and the critical attitude on the diversity of each cultural assumption on VAW were developed by the leaders since the beginnings of the Course. That was useful for migrant women for improving their autonomy during discussions on controversial issues, law cases and with professionals of the local welfare system. This attitude could be very important for the implementation of a multicultural discourse on VAW and for giving authority to participants in their role of Mentor of Community.

The Course reached two “products”: the short stories and the *Charter for Community Mentor*.

The short stories validated the capacity of the group to produce their discourse on VAW in a frame of cultural plurality of voices that find some common approaches and tools to support other women. The short stories will publish in Italian to give strength to the Community Mentor group as a collective of real people working in Padua and in the Veneto context.

The *Charter* could be a tool, which present the Community Mentor group to the institutional context, to their communities and in public discussion on VAW.

The whole Course gave birth to an Association of “Community Mentor against Gender Violence” and their members could propose it to institutions and society.

In April 2013, apart this comparative report, the project will publish also:

- 1) *SPEAK OUT! Migranti e Mentor di comunità contro la violenza di genere*, edited by Franca Bimbi and Alberta Basaglia, CLEUP, Padua (300 pages). This publication is the Italian handbook for the *SPEAK OUT!* project;
- 2) *Migrazioni, Genere, Accoglienza. Mentor di comunità e buone pratiche contro la violenza*, edited by aria Grazia Peron, CLEUP, Padua (50 pages). This book is a local short handbook for the *SPEAK OUT!* project.

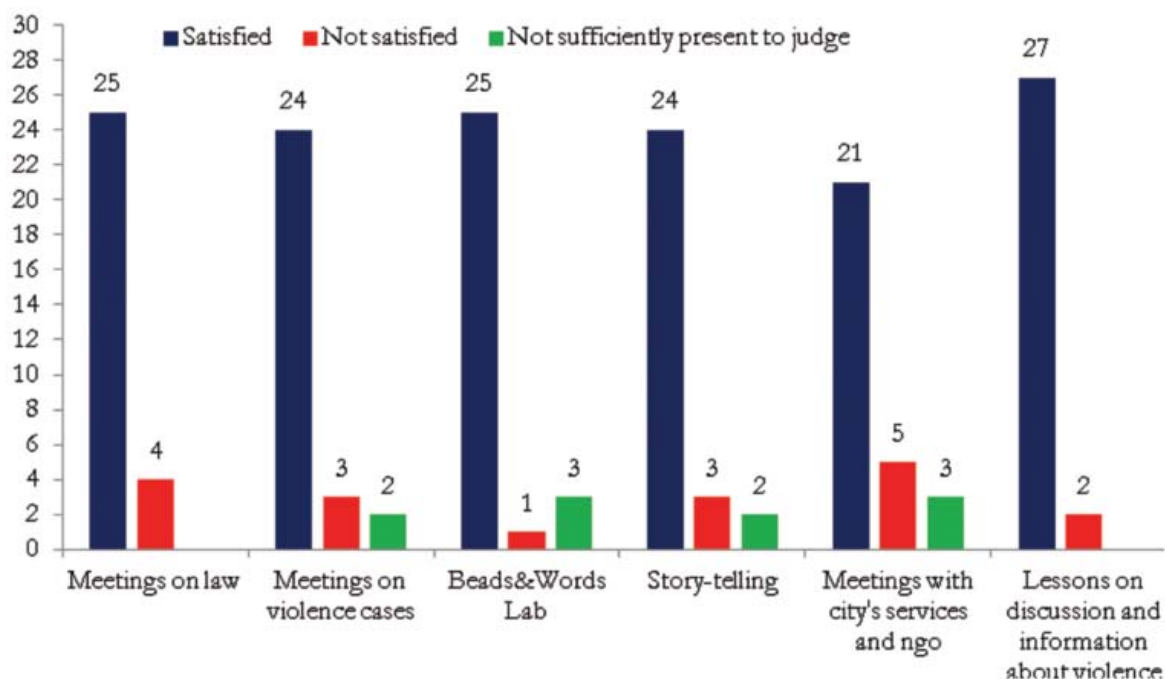
## Self-Evaluation

At the end of the «Course for Community Mentor to Prevent and Contrast Violence Against Women» we submitted to participants a very small questionnaire to understand if they appreciated the path.

We gave 32 questionnaires and we received back 29. We asked the scale of satisfaction related to activities we proposed.

“Lessons on discussion and information about violence”, which were part of the *Controversial Issues Lab*, received the highest level of satisfaction. Out of 29 respondents, 27 are satisfied and only 2 state dissatisfaction with the proposed activity.

In reference to the “Meetings on law”, which were part of the *Right and Legislation Lab*, 25 people expressed satisfaction, while 4 declared their dissatisfaction.



About “Beads&Words Lab” 25 participants were satisfied, 1 was not satisfied and 3 were not sufficiently present to judge. The “Story-telling” activity that was also part of the *Beads&Words Lab*, satisfied 24 people, did not satisfied 3 and 2 were not sufficiently present to judge.

“Meetings on violence cases”, which were parts of the *Welfare System Lab*, satisfied 24 participants, 3 were not satisfied and 2 were not sufficiently present to judge.

Finally “Meetings with city’s services and NGO”, which were also part of the *Welfare System Lab*, constitute the activity with a lower degree of satisfaction: 21 people express satisfaction, 3 dissatisfaction and 5 were not sufficiently present to judge.

We asked participants to give us an advice to improve the Course. Each person could choose 1 or 2 options. The four options that obtained the higher level of preferences were:

- “Promote internship in associations or services dealing with violence against women” with 14 preferences.
- “Foresee practical ways to collaborate with associations and services” and “Face more cases of violence with discussion on possible solutions” that received 12 preferences each.
- “Promote internship in association or services dealing with migrants” with 10 preferences.

From these responses we can gather that participants considered important to put into practice the abilities and capabilities developed during the Course. Internship or collaborations with anti-violence centres or associations active in the territory could give them this possibility.

The self-evaluation shows that the Course could be considered an initial experience of training on VAW, which will require more in-depth work in the future, in order to improve knowledge and to become a reliable practical supporter to other women.

### **9.13. Charter for the Community Mentor against Violence on Women**

- 1) The Mentor’s place is a border’s place, a place full of movement; a meeting point for people, ideas and different cultures. It is a fluid place where it is possible to develop a process that can help overcoming prejudices.
- 2) The Mentor’s space is full of trust and strength; she is open and welcomes everybody without judging and forcing, nevertheless. The woman who asks for help can hide shady areas which cannot be convincing, but these shady areas are very important, because they mean that help is needed.

- 3) The Mentor's time is a time of perseverance and flexibility, made by many moments, rich in value: there is the fast and immediate time of emergency; there is the slow and calm time for listening; there is the time which takes time, and that is the time for reflection; there is the concrete time for helping; there is the realistic and possible time for disappointment, which, however, is not a waste of time.
- 4) The Mentor is a box full of stories, and also the most unreal ones must be welcomed. For the people who tell them, they may be not unreal. The story is word: to tell a story helps the awareness, both for the person who tells it both for the person who listen to it.
- 5) The Mentor, to build "real" relationships, must always come close other women as a blank sheet. In this way, suspicion does not win over the relationship, and people recognize their prejudices and others'. People can face fear which derives from that.
- 6) In the complexity of a care and supportive work, the Mentor takes strength from her colleagues. A person who needs help has complex needs.
- 7) Every action of the project must be agreed by the person who the Mentor meets, in a relationship where reciprocal sincerity welcomes the questions and builds the answers.
- 8) The Mentor must use herself as a tool: flexibility, authenticity and self-esteem must always be with her; in the relationship her way of dressing and talking become resources.
- 9) When she meets a woman who is suffering violence, the Mentor must always show a vital push, being always positive. Bangs hit bodies that die; awareness makes them live.
- 10) When she deals with an emergency, the Mentor must always have the consciousness of her limits. To recognize our limits is a sign of professionalism.
- 11) The Mentor must use the experience of her failures to reinforce paths of women who address her. She must never forget that from stories of violence is not always possible to come out.
- 12) The Mentor must have tools to confront with the violent man. Often, she cannot leave out of consideration this man's life and problems.
- 13) The Mentor's tools are also some words: intuition, transformation, fantasy, life, care, contact, limit, listening, training, crossroads, fluidity, confrontation, movement, strength, constancy. The Mentor works with her body, head, eyes, ears, hands, mouth, nose, belly, feet.

## 9.14. Dissemination and Future Activities

### Dissemination and Final Conference

The dissemination activities consisted in meetings in Italian High schools and in the organization of the Final Conference that will take place on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> and Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2013.

<b>12.01.2012</b>	Meeting in High School “Stefanini”, Mestre (VE)
<b>12.18.2012</b>	Meeting in High School “Benedetti”, Venice
<b>02.19.2013</b>	Meeting in High School “Stefanini”, Mestre (VE)
<b>02.21-22.2013</b>	Final Conference in Venice and Padua

The meetings with High schools were coordinated by a trainer (Sara Cavallaro) with the participation of two or three Mentors. At the beginning the trainer explained to the students the *SPEAK OUT!* project and its realization, after that the meetings were developed in the following way:

1. Projection of a part of the movie “Bellissime” by Giovanna Gagliardo, which deals with the history of women in Italy.
2. Discussion about the movie.
3. Students were divided into groups and invited to reflect about key-words on VAW (discrimination, violence, gender, identity, roles, body, freedom, power).
4. Sharing of the reflections.
5. Production of new key-words, which express the point of view of students on VAW.
6. Reading of some short-stories written by the Mentors during the Beads&Words Laboratory.

The development of the “Violence against women” issue was adapted considering the type of school and the type of students (majority of males or females). The meetings aimed at sharing with students the experience of the Beads&Words Laboratory and at developing with them a discourse on violence against women, for this reason the presence of Mentors was very important. The Italian team met 2 schools, around 150 students:

- Social Science High School, Liceo Statale “L. Stefanini”, Venezia-Mestre;
- Scientific Science High School, Liceo “G.B. Benedetti”, Venezia.

## “In Our Name”: A MRM Women’s Association (by the Course’s Participants)

The idea of creating an association was born at the end of the training course on Community Mentor within the *SPEAK OUT!* project supported by the EU Daphne Programme. As a group we strongly wished to keep in touch with each other and continue to explore the important issues dealt with during the course while starting to find a way to develop them from theory to practice. In fact, the great potential our group possessed had already emerged during the course: a group made up of immigrant women of different nationalities and women from immigrant backgrounds, with average, medium or high levels of education and a lot of expertise to offer. Women with great experiences in life and work, who are direct or indirect witnesses of a migration process that has impacted their lives enabling them to become resilient, a capacity that must be shared and transmitted to the society in which they live.

At present we are a network of 35 women who actively participated in the training course thus receiving a certificate of attendance (among the 35 certificates of attendance, 3 were given to those participants *who* due to work and family issues couldn’t reach the percentage of attendance required but *who were nevertheless* an important part of the group). We have embarked on the path towards the creation of an association proposing the following objectives: to consolidate the Mentor figure in the communities in which we operate; to expand our network of women and train other mentors; to contrast and prevent gender-based violence in all its forms, providing empowerment tools to immigrant



women at all levels accompanied with tools for building resilience; to become an authoritative person in order to influence not only the policies, but also the politics related to issues of gender-violence, immigration and women generally speaking; to involve men in this project; to elaborate and utilize a reasoned terminology of our own related to issues of immigration and gender-violence; to distinguish ourselves for the quality of actions, approaches and methodologies; to be a reference point for women.

With this purpose, we have set up a virtual platform of communication in Google Groups (a free Google service that supports group discussions) called “Mentor di comunità” which is an internal tool that enables us to tackle organizational and logistical aspects notwithstanding the distance, by also allowing us to discuss crucial themes related to the establishment and running of the association. Through this medium, activated on October 11<sup>th</sup> 2012, we have organized three meetings to date (10/27/12, 11/17/12, 12/01/12), in the main hall of the Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Education and Applied Psychology at the University of Padua, a venue made available to us because of the *SPEAK OUT!* project. A fourth meeting was held on 12/14/12 and after that we had a pizza together, where *we were able to* strengthen our relationships by spending time together as women. These meetings have been instrumental in helping us to follow up with our on-line discussions. Moreover, realizing how important it is for us to have a firm foundation in order to resist and thus keep existing we decided to prepare forms that would help us collect more information concerning our skills, availability and willingness. A form with the purpose of understanding our existing skills and time resources was filled by each one of us and sent back via email, and was then discussed in our first meeting on October 27<sup>th</sup> 2012. Subsequently, a second form was prepared to assemble every associate’s point of view on the objectives that the association should pursue, on their views on women in general and immigrant women in particular and above all their vision on violence.

Currently we are dealing with the definition of our philosophy, our vision and objectives. We already have a well-defined management structure (on the second meeting held on November 17<sup>th</sup> 2012 the assembly elected the board of directors, composed of 13 members, including the President and the Vice-President) and an open discussion on the name and type of the association is in progress. Our immediate goal is the official constitution of our association by the end of March 2013. We are also looking for an operational headquarters and a venue for the association’s inauguration.

Our ambitions are many: as immigrant women and women of immigrant backgrounds we want to make sure that our role in the prevention and fight against any form of violence in society is well acknowledged. We wish to strive hard to prevent, contrast and denounce the violence that most immigrant women continuously endure not only as women, but also as immigrants. We want to become protagonists of a new social activism, living witnesses of the possibility of abandoning the passive role that society compels us to interpret



and stop being its' continuous subject of research. Moreover we would like to offer our point of view and a new key approach in first place to the Italian society but not only concerning these phenomenon - the precious approach of catching the differences and the transformations inside the intercultural societies that only a foreigner may hold. We aspire to hold a key position in our society both locally/nationally and internationally.

## 9.15. Final Remarks: Outside and Inside the Training Course and Laboratories

### Processes and “Products”. The Difficult Evaluation of the Results

Evaluating the results of the training activities, their Laboratories and in particular the Beads&Words one, in relation to the objectives of the project, differs if we are more focused on the processes or on the products. The evaluation can also change according to what, and in which degree, we consider relevant for the women's empowerment: recognizing the differences, the awareness of the dynamics of inequality, the improvement of one's capabilities, claiming one's rights.

In this final paragraph we put our attention especially on the Beads&Words Lab, considered as the core of the Course of training activities for enlightening the whole path.

### The Processes

It is clear that the path of the Laboratory is mainly oriented towards some processes:

- the discussion about VAW by sharing chosen events of one's biography;
- the development of a feminine feeling for an emotional and relational citizenship, by sharing personal experiences in a small group;
- going from strangeness to the recognition of the communality in the differences;
- achieving an awareness on the rights, thus the process of overcoming identity constructions which categorize and separate women as migrants, refugees, natives, first or second generation.

The processes that started from the opening session of the Course where the Lab perspective showed the will of converging in the meaning of “common world of the women” and a path for creating a community “free from violence”.

But both have two limits: 1) the auto-selection and the selection of the team and the attendees; 2) an identification that can develop or not a discursive convergence.

As a primary objective there was the recognition of the reciprocal differences, the convergence between the trainers and the attendees, and among the

attendees themselves. Differences could be considered as resources if they would be used to enlarge the practical interpretation of the gender citizenship paths. It means that the voice of the MRM women's could implement the pluralism of the public debate also introducing some points of view contrasting a standard interpretation of "our" universalism.

On that, the proceeding of the Laboratory indicates a practical grass-roots feminist methodology ("from women, the strength of the women") that lead to the elaboration of a synthesis of experiential emotions and critical thinking on one's belonging. It could happen thanks to the exchange of information and discussions on the possible use of the Italian system of rights and to the search of comprehension if not convergence on some controversial issues, followed by the production of experiential writings. But the validation of the results, out of its context, can only be partially replicated.

## The "Products"

It is also for this reason that the Italian team chose to work for two "products" that are almost partially replicable: the short stories and the Charter.

The short stories' final aim is the definition, by the attendees, of their interpretations on what gender-based violence is and the ways to get out of it.

The Charter's purpose is the construction of a moral discourse addressing their selves, and the transfer to a gender political discourse and an organizational offer to the community and the institutions. It deals with the accountability criteria of a Mentor engaged in the combat against VAW.

It is interesting to notice that the topics and the style of the two products differ and are influenced by each destination. The stories are for the "inside", the Charter is opened to the outside world.

The short stories show the capability of the attendees to the Course in:

- reading visible or personal episodes of violence through the lens of the structures of the violence: symbolic, political, material, institutional, labour-related, familiar, intimate life-related.
- learning to attentively consider the centrality of gender relations in the different dynamics of violence;
- putting self-determination, autonomy of choice and networks among women at the core of life's turning points.

However, escaping violence as discussed in the stories indicates different patterns of social identity. Individualization and autonomy of women's choices are sometimes presented as aims of self-fulfillment, sometimes as tools to redefine family relationships, more often both.

We could state that these MRM women, in order to get out from a violent existence, are consciously seeking a balance among personal interpretations of "modernity" and "tradition". They seem aware of the importance, in life and mi-

gration stories, of the person's self-continuity. We can underline the complex of this moral attitude as relating to the women's caring habitus concerned with the attention of the responsibility for the others and for the maintaining of interpersonal ties.

If in the short stories what emerges is diversity and standing in between different worlds, in the Charter a universalistic discourse is rather prevailing, referring to an imaginary city, the community and all the institutions that could be involved in the struggle against VAW and in the support of Mentor's transcultural work. Because of its public destination, in the Charter issues such as the peaceful of gender relations, citizens' equality, recognition of the differences are presented as aims accorded to Mentor's work, namely the combat against VAW.

In sum, the two "products" indicate how patterns of social change complement each other: individual and collective paths (with the short stories) are not immediately transferable in the public sphere, and the agencies requiring wide agreement and synergy to have a real voice in the public life (with the Charter). To produce "Speak out!" against gender-based violence the strength of women's subjectivities and the authoritative presence of women in the public sphere are both necessities, even if they differ.

### **More on Processes. Inside the Authorship: The Intimate and Creative Path for "A New Dawn"**

The need for public women's empowerment, which is the condition allowing the strength to *SPEAK OUT!*, requires fine changing processes in a micro-level that are not easy to measure and replicate. It's the backstage in which is produced a "gender sensitive" discourse, issued in common by approaching relations among different women.

Despite the relevance and the duplication of the "products", we have to highlight the importance of some processes of subjectivization especially during the Beads&Words Laboratory.

For some attendees, the Course has been an occasion to confide experiences of violence, in particular the institutional, family-related, and labour-related ones. During the Laboratory, in some cases the writing made possible facing the suffering and exiting from silence, self-thinking, making understandable to oneself and to the others inexplicable facts.

Some of the participants to the Laboratory, namely the Authors of the short story titled "A New Dawn", had also elaborated an analysis of their story which gives a fine example of the circular relation between speaking and producing meanings.

*New Dawn is a fiction", but strongly rooted in the biographical experiences of two women of the group. We chose to give to the first main character a different origin from the ones of the group (Argentina), while to the other main character we chose to give*

*an indefinite origin (Central Africa, Anglophone). This choice has been taken with the awareness that stories of migration and violence have lots of issues in common that can ideally unify women (in a sort of suffered sisterhood), regardless of the nationalities, ethnic-somatic characteristics and religious beliefs.*

*For many reasons we chose to make this story occurring in a date after its writing, but previous to its reading in the class: March 21 2012. March 21 is the first spring day and the starting of a new cycle. Gisela and Florence are aware of this date and they associate to it a turning point in their lives (a new dawn). Both the women show to be fatalist (“the magic light of this dawn will be as a guiding one for me” thinks Gisela, while Florence welcomes the signs from God: the biblical verse of Rut and the photography taken from the ground, also this latter welcomed as a guiding light). Also for us in the group this date has been a “new dawn”, that let us deeper know ourselves, let us confide and host experiences not easy to tell, let us – thanks to discussion and fantasy-give meaning and universality to our stories, imagine not a easily happy ending (as in fairy tales), but an hopeful one to be constructed with the strength of love and will.*

## Conclusion

Following the authors’ thinking of “A New Dawn” we have to ask ourselves if the Training Course and its Laboratories produced meanings and universality. We consider two possibilities.

We ask ourselves if the result is “a sort of suffered sisterhood” that comes from the common migratory experience and partly from common violence experiences, or it is a new kind of training which permits a deeper knowledge of ourselves as a starting point for an agency based on personal independence and on the capability of the collective project.

The violence issue represents a hard challenge. Both interiorly and externally the group should tackle the assigned label of a sort of a double suffered sisterhood, as migrant and as possible victim of violence.

Now, at the end of the project this risk seems easy to overcome. Indeed, the importance of the experience of *SPEAK OUT!* in Padua and in the Veneto Region consists in the fact that a group of MRM women worked together, they started from different understanding on intimate issue, they integrated their difference without rejecting them and they planned a common action.

The achievement of an embryonic multicultural agency seems a hopeful provisional ending “*constructed with the strength of love and will*”.

### 10.1. The Workshop

In Catalonia, the training experience with migrant women was developed by Fundació SURT during the first semester of 2012. All activities took place as part of a comprehensive workshop that we have called “Mujeres Diversas, Vivencias Comunes”.<sup>1</sup>

The following report provides an overview of the empowerment workshop carried out. First of all, the general and specific objectives of the workshop are presented. Then, the methodology, organisation and characteristics of participants are described. The fourth and fifth sections are devoted to the structure and development of the workshop and, finally, some recommendations are provided on the basis of the assessment of the training experience.

#### Objectives of the Workshop

The general objective of the workshop was to offer migrant women from different countries a meeting point to share their migration experience and to train them to prevent gender-based violence in their communities. The workshop also had the following specific objectives:

- to raise awareness among migrant women about violence against women by facilitating the identification of situations of gender-based discrimination and gender-based violence in all spheres;
- to reflect on gender identity and inequality, as well as gender socialization, according to every women’s home culture;
- to train women to recognize the gender-based violence’s cycle and its particular effects in migrant women’s lives;
- to train women to improve their self-esteem and support their empowerment;
- to provide information on rights and resources that support women against gender-based violence in their host countries;
- to encourage women to act as mentors and agents of social change for gender equality within their communities;

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<sup>1</sup> “Diversity of women, common life-experiences”

- to promote the development of a self-help network among migrant women and their citizenship in the host society.

## Methodology

A socio-educational methodology from a gender and intercultural perspective was applied as an intervention approach in the workshop with migrant women. In this sense, and in order to promote a warm atmosphere, the workshop development aimed at offering participants a space to share experiences, to raise awareness, to create debate and discussion, reflection and understanding of gender equality, as well as to provide appropriate theoretical information about basic issues related to Women's Rights, gender-based violence and gender equality.

Different group activities, such as activities promoting trust, body work/relaxation, based on role-playing and video-forums were used to promote the motivation to learn, as well as developing empathy, active listening, motivation for change and active citizenship, while enhancing self-esteem and fostering bonds among women.

The group was open to add new participants in the first two meetings. After that period, the group was closed in order to contribute to a comfortable atmosphere of confidentiality regarding the experiences and emotions that might arise during the workshop. Furthermore, as the workshop was structured in three modules, and objectives progressively acquired, it would have not been adequate to add new participants once the discussion meetings were advanced and the group itself was consolidated.

Although the workshop was conceived as a group activity, and indeed it worked as a group, the team also decided to open the possibility to provide individual support to women if they wanted to.

As it will be described later, as part of the process of constituting the workshop, a first individual interview for the selection of the participants was made. This first individual meeting aimed not only at recruiting women according to the required profile, but also at establishing a first contact between the facilitator and each woman. This first meeting allowed to gather information about every woman's emotional state, as well as family, social, economic or work circumstances. Understanding the personal situation of each woman is crucial, since it allows the facilitator to provide additional information to women about other projects or resources of the organisation from which they also might benefit, especially in case of women who have suffered gender-based violence. In doing so, we were also dealing with one of the specific aims of the workshop; to familiarize women with the services and counselling resources addressed to them, while facilitating their access to those services.

For this reason, at any time during the development of the workshop women could request a private interview in case they needed it. These interviews were thus conceived as an additional space for women where they could acquire addi-

tional information related to any situation affecting them as migrant women. In exceptional occasions, women were also counselled by phone in between the group meetings

## **Description of the Organization of the Workshop**

### **Dissemination of the Workshop**

In order to reach participants, a dissemination and recruitment strategy was designed. In this sense, firstly the workshop was internally disseminated within SURT professionals and beneficiaries. This was done through different ways:

- Information brochures were distributed within SURT premises and posters were displayed on our bulletin boards.
- SURT professionals informed migrant women participating in other programmes about the existence of such a workshop.
- Some migrant women who had participated in former programmes at SURT were also informed.

In parallel, the workshop was also announced to different associations working with migrant women, both by email and through personal meetings in order to present the aims of the workshop.

### **Timing, Length of the Workshop and Frequency of the Session**

The workshop took place from January to May 2012 and was developed throughout 13 weekly sessions. They were scheduled on Tuesdays at 14 PM and lasted for 4-5 hours each. The length of the whole workshop was approximately 60 hours, due to the extension of some of the sessions, when the participants were so involved with the activities and discussions that the meetings sometimes extended to even more than 5 hours.

### **Selection Criteria**

The target population for this workshop was migrant women interested in acquiring tools for the prevention of gender-based violence. It was open to both migrant women who had not experienced gender-based violence and migrant women who identified themselves as having suffered this violence. In this regard, women were informed that the aim of the workshop was not to provide therapy, but to deliver information and training for the prevention of gender-based violence. The specific selection criteria to make sure that participants would make the best of the workshop were the following ones:

- to be a migrant woman;
- to have a middle level in Spanish conversation;
- to have leadership abilities and to be interested in expanding the acquired knowledge in the workshop among other women in their community;

- to be emotionally able to participate in the group (if women had suffered gender-based violence);
- to commit to attending all sessions, since the workshop was structured into three interrelated and complementary modules.

### **Number of Participants**

The group was planned to gather 10 to 15 women minimum, with a view to guarantee that there were enough diversity for the discussions, teamwork and mirroring.

At the first moment and after making intense dissemination of the workshop, 15 women were interested in participating. Eventually, however, only 10 of them were able to initiate the workshop. The reasons why the other 5 women did not join the group were the following:

- 2 women could not attend the workshop in the scheduled time, as they were working.
- 1 woman voluntarily refused to participate after the specific objectives of the workshop were explained to her; she did not have self-confidence in talking in a group and talking to other women in her community as a mentor.
- 2 other women were looking for a therapeutic group to face the violence they were suffering at the time, and they were not able to participate in the group due to their emotional situation, which could interfere in the appropriate development of the workshop.

In the end, 10 women participated. This number of participants was considered optimal to start the workshop, as dealing with personal experiences and private feelings requires an atmosphere of confidentiality and a number of 10 women would ensure that each participant had time to express herself, and that the facilitator/s were able to pay attention to each participant, as well as to the dynamics going on in the group as a whole.

It should also be mentioned that 3 of the 10 participants joined the group after being invited by some of the women who already were selected, because they valued that some other women they knew would also be interested in participating. After the selection interviews to these 3 new women, the group was finally consolidated with 10 participants.

### **Profile of Participants**

The women that took part in the workshop had a diverse profile in terms of country of origin, age, level of education and experiences of gender-based violence, among others. The following graphics show the profiles of the migrant women participating in the workshop.



Table 20: Participants

Country of origin		Length of stay in Spain	
Colombia	30%	1 year or less	20%
Senegal	30%	2-5 years	50%
Ecuador	10%	6-10 years	20%
Bangladesh	10%	Other	10%
Other	20%	<b>Migration permit</b>	
<b>Age</b>		Family reunification	80%
30-40 years old	70%	Other	20%
41-50 years old	30%	<b>Employment status</b>	
<b>Marital status</b>		Employed	30%
Married	40%	Unemployed	70%
Separated	20%	<b>Level of education</b>	
Divorced	40%	Primary	30%
<b>Gender violence in intimate relationship</b>		Secondary	60%
Yes	60%	University	10%
No	40%		

## Structure of the Workshop

### Module 1. Group Discussions

1. Presentation of the SURT Foundation, the workshop and its objectives. Group presentation and group consensus on code and rules for the development of meetings. Expectations on the workshop and its purpose. Stories of women's experiences of gender-based violence.
2. Difference between the concepts of sex and gender. Gender stereotypes and gender socialization related to different cultures. Diverse perceptions and interculturality.
3. Areas of discrimination and gender-based violence as a consequence of the patriarchal social model prevalent in all cultures. Role of women in history and their "invisibility". Gender equality and women's fight for their rights in the whole world. Meaning of gender violence: women's self-

definitions of gender-based violence. The influence of religion and cultural values on gender-based violence. Prevalence of gender-based violence in different countries of the world.

## Module 2. Training Meetings

1. Migrant women and gender-based violence different spheres outside intimate partnerships. Sharing experiences of discrimination and violence. Identifying different spheres where gender-based violence may happen in the host country. Detecting types of violence in intimate relationships and their degree of visibility.
2. The migration process and its consequences in the life of each woman, related to gender-based violence. To learn to enhance migrant women's self-confidence.
3. Myths about love: cultural representations and individual conceptions of intimate partnerships. Helping to identify gender-based violence in intimate relationships.
4. The cycle of gender-based violence. Understanding why it is so difficult to escape from this cycle.
5. Assertiveness, communication and how to handle conflictive situations. Understanding the decision-making process when leaving a violent relationship. How to help a woman who is suffering gender violence: security measures.

## Module 3. Self-help groups

1. Knowing women's support networks from a transnational perspective. Resources and services supporting women.
2. Human rights and laws protecting women. Importance of the feminist movement and the achievements of women throughout history. Being a mentor to women in a community.
3. Promoting social participation of women as active citizens. Promoting self-help networking among migrant women, motivating women to collaborate with other women to work towards common goals.
4. Closure of the workshop: to make a global revision of the sessions and its main contents and to give and receive feedback of the whole process.

The sessions of the workshop were developed through three specific modules: group discussions, training meetings and self-help groups.

In each module specific topics were approached. Despite the fact that the second module was specifically focused to provide women with training and useful tools to empower women, specific activities for women's empowerment were

present throughout the whole workshop in each meeting as a crosscutting element. The methodology applied allowed from the first session to introduce different activities that fostered an empowerment process. In this sense, the group activities carried out aimed at reinforcing the skills of each woman in their interactions with others, at reflecting on how they communicate or at expressing their opinions freely, without feeling coerced or prosecuted. Overall, each session, apart from its thematic contents, was designed so that, step by step, the empowerment and personal growth of women were enhanced throughout the workshop development.

## Topics of Each Module

The topics and aims being tackled within each module are outlined below:

### *Module 1: Group discussions*

This module sought:

- To create links between the women in the group.
- To raise awareness about gender-based violence by discussing and reflecting about:
  - differences between the concepts of sex and gender.
  - Gender stereotypes and gender socialization related to different cultures.
  - Diverse perceptions and inter-culturality.
  - Areas where discrimination against women occurs.
  - Role of women in History and their “invisibility”.
  - Gender equality and women’s fight for their rights in the world.
  - Meaning of gender-based violence: women’s self-definitions of gender-based violence.
  - The influence of religion and cultural values on gender-based violence.
  - Prevalence of gender-based violence in different countries of the world.
- To foster personal growth by:
  - raising awareness about women’s communication’s skills and improving them.
  - Improving women’s self-esteem.

### *Module 2: Training meetings*

Module 2 intended:

- to enhance the bonding between the women in the group.
- To encourage women to share their own experiences of gender discrimination and gender-based violence.
- To reflect on the different types of gender-based violence and the different areas where it may take place, with a focus on those that affect migrant women.
- To promote women’s detection of gender-based violence.

- To reflect on the migration process and its consequences in the life of each woman, related to gender-based violence.
- To reflect on and question myths about love, their cultural representations and individual conceptions of intimate partnerships.
- To recognize the cycle of violence in intimate-partnerships, its effects on women's lives and the more specific effects on migrant women.
- To train women on how to help a woman who is suffering gender violence with respect and sensitivity.
- To train women in evaluating themselves and others, as well as in collaborating with others to work towards common goals.
- To motivate women to feel comfortable giving advice and support to women who are suffering gender violence.
- To foster personal growth by:
  - \* Enhancing empathy and active-listening skills.
  - \* Promoting verbal and non-verbal communication.
  - \* Enhancing self-esteem, assertiveness and the ability to take decisions.
  - \* Learning different ways to react and handle conflicts from an intercultural and gender perspective.

### *Module 3: Self-help groups*

Module 3 sought:

- to provide information on gender-based violence: laws, rights, resources and services supporting women.
- To reflect on human rights, the feminist movement and the achievements of women throughout history.
- To promote the social participation of women as active citizens.
- To promote self-help networking among migrant women, motivating them to mentoring and collaborating with other women to work towards common goals.

## 10.2. Development of the Workshop

### **Implementation of Module 1: Group Discussions**

Module 1: Timetable

The meetings of this module were arranged every Tuesday from January 16<sup>th</sup> to March 13<sup>th</sup> in SURT

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Meeting: Topics**

- Presentation of the SURT Foundation, the workshop and its objectives.
- Group presentation and group consensus on code and rules for the development of the meetings.

- Expectations about the workshop and its purpose.
- Narrative of women's experiences of gender-based violence.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Meeting: Development**

This first meeting with the group began with different activities of presentation for women in order to promote a first contact with each other. In addition, other activities to distend and relax the group were also used in the middle of the session, after a break. To close the session, women had a few minutes to express how they had felt during this first meeting.

In this first session, one of the women shared her experience of gender violence with the group. She expressed the need to talk about it with women outside her community. This woman explained that her experience with violence was still recent and that she had not yet been able to talk about it openly with anyone due to the lack of family or friends in Barcelona. All the other women of the group spontaneously offered her their support by listening and giving her their trust and understanding. They shared their telephone numbers and encouraged her to call them if she was feeling alone.

In this first meeting, once more, and as it had been already explained to each woman in the individual interviews, emphasis was put on the fact that the workshop was not a therapeutic meeting for women who had suffered violence, but a training workshop for the prevention of violence against women in migrant communities. However, by sharing her experience in the group, the woman who presented her violent experience gave opportunity to the participants to have a first and direct contact with the reality of violence against women and to know one of the most visible consequences in the life of a migrant woman when suffering violence: her solitude, as she herself defined her emotional condition at that moment.

The initiative of this woman to tell her experience in the privacy of the group was useful to reach an agreement among all the participants on the confidentiality of the issues raised in the group. Women became conscious of the importance of feeling safe in the group to express emotions and opinions without any fear of being judged or criticized.

This first meeting ended with a first and spontaneous demonstration of empathy and solidarity, expressed by the participants, one by one, to the woman who had told them her experience of gender-based violence. The commitment of all participants to her support, providing her with insightful comments, while at the same time encouraging her to have their help, was formidable.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting: Topics**

- Difference between the concepts of sex and gender.
- Gender stereotypes and gender socialization related to different cultures.
- Diverse perceptions and interculturality.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting: Development

This second session began with a greeting activity through which women identified common aspects between them, with the double objective to reinforce the bonding among women and to create an atmosphere of confidence and comfort in the group.

In order to initiate the debate, women participated in pairs in an activity where they had to choose “typical” qualities of women and “typical” qualities of men. The aim of this activity was to create reflection by means of the comparison of their assumptions on the differences between sex and gender, and how gender stereotypes are learned through socialization. Similarly, the bases of gender inequality were made visible.

Throughout the session, women analysed aspects of their daily lives and things that they observed in their environment, establishing comparisons between their beliefs, values and life habits, and those of the other women and men in their community and in the host country.

Women identified values, beliefs and traditions transmitted in the different cultures they belonged to, and the consequences that they had had on their lives. One of the women explained to the group that the reason for her migration was precisely to escape from the consequences that traditions and rigid gender roles had in her life. To her, migrating and leaving her family and social environment was the beginning of a journey to freedom.

At the end of this session, women agreed that men and women could develop the same capacities and skills to do the same tasks and jobs inside and outside the home, but that there are cultural and social barriers in each country preventing gender equality. All of them also agreed that before coming to Spain they thought equality between women and men was more widespread than in their home countries, but they had the perception that in fact it is not so common.

To emphasize the importance of the interpretation of the reality depending on cultural rules, the following images were shown, one by one, to make it evident that reality is not always as it seems, and even if it seems to us absolutely obvious, it might not be as we see it. These were some of the images used for this activity:

Some of the images used to analyse diversity of perceptions as an introduction to interculturality.

One by one, women watched every card and every one explained to the group what she had seen at them. These images always produce different observations and give the opportunity to reflect about the fact that nobody is absolutely right or absolutely wrong. On the contrary, both opinions are true, depending on the point of views of everyone.

Women themselves commented that to be conscious of the different perceptions and interpretations of a same fact is not only important when talking about gender stereotypes but also when talking about different countries and different

cultures. To be open to accept that there are different points of view is the basis to reach equality, not only in gender terms but also in an intercultural society. They stated that, as migrant women, it was very important to be flexible and change some of their own convictions about themselves as women, and learn from the host society new habits in their relationships with men that could improve their quality of life. At the same time, they highlighted that it was essential to share with the host society their different points of view about other cultural concepts relating family or friendship, which could also enrich the cultural development of the host society.

Before the end of the session, a body activity was carried out with a view to let women go in a distended and relaxed state.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting: Topics**

Areas of discrimination and gender-based violence as a consequence of the patriarchal social model prevalent in all cultures.

Role of women in history and their “invisibility”.

Gender equality and women’s fight for their rights in the whole world.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting: Development**

This session was celebrated a few days after March 8<sup>th</sup>, the International Woman’s Day and it was a good opportunity to create debate on the relevant role of many women along history in different areas: scientific, educational, literary, artistic or political.

A first explanatory video was projected on the historical origin of the International Day of Women. After watching this first video, women were asked to think of other women’s outstanding actor initiative in their countries of origin in relation to the struggle for gender equality.

One of the women from Senegal talked about Awa Marie Coll-Seck, a Senegalese doctor and former Minister of Health. She admired her capacity to reach such a high level as a public person in an area dominated by men. Another woman from Colombia explained that she did not know names, but that in her country you could now hear more and more news on concentrations of women organised by feminist organizations claiming to have the same opportunities as men in relation to their participation in the labour market.

Women reached a consensus on the fact that, when looking for equality between men and women, women are the ones who have to fight for it. They do so mostly alone, without the support of men, sometimes even without the support of their husbands or close relatives.

At this point, a second video was screened, including images of relevant women in history. The aim of this second video was to promote reflection on the role of women in history and their “invisibility” as a form of discrimination.

The participants identified the different areas where women have historically been discriminated according to a socio-patriarchal model. They agreed that gen-

der discrimination and inequality happens all over the world, even in democratic societies. In this regard, women were given the example of the differences in wages between men and women when performing the same functions. They claimed to be aware of this information in their home countries, but they were very surprised to know that even in Northern European countries there is also gender inequality.

They recognized the great importance of women’s role in the development of history. They discussed the status of women in their home countries and the different rates in progress on gender equality according to each country and culture. At this point, one of the women from Senegal added that, from her point of view, the general situation of women in Africa was even worse than in Latin America because of two elements: the differences in decolonization and independence in every continent, and the differences in the importance of religion in state affairs, which interferes in women’s development, avoiding them to be independent beings and providing links with a man.

Finally, women built together a mural where they exposed the image of 4 important women in history, with some information on their lives and achievements. The group said goodbye to each other with a body group dynamics activity of expansion and laughs.



Mural with images of Benazir Bhutto, Marie Curie and Rigoberta Menchú



## Assessment of Module 1: Group Discussions

In all the meetings of this module, both for starting and closing the discussions, different activities were done with a view to create a confidence atmosphere among women and foster bonding within the group. Such activities were thought to allow women practice their abilities to listen in an active manner, to openly express their own emotions and development their empathy and their communicative skills.

Group discussions allowed women to understand how gender violence takes place in their countries of origin and raise their awareness on the fact that a single act can be interpreted differently depending on the cultural point of view of each one.

Participants reflected about their own prejudices about gender stereotypes and gender-based violence. They recognized the importance of a self-evaluation of gender stereotypes in order to change some of their deep beliefs or habits that may prevent their freedom, both in their family or intimate relationships, and in the social and labour areas. Women who were mothers, for instance, raised the importance of acting themselves as mirrors in front of their children: educated in equality and be free of stereotyped behaviours according to the gender roles.

Throughout the debates, some women admitted that, even if they migrated involuntarily (e.g. some of the reunified women), migration itself was a rich experience. It opened their minds to some aspects that they never before had thought about: to have the opportunity to speak openly about topics that in some cases, due to their culture of origin, are a taboo in their family or communities.

While it was initially observed that coming from the same country helped women to feel more confidence inside the group, later on it was observed that, when expressing intimate experiences of violence, belonging to the same community could generate some reservations among women. In this sense, for example, one of the women who had suffered gender-based violence recognised that she did not feel comfortable because there were in the group some women of her community that could know or have contact with persons in contact with her ex-husband; another woman recognised that she felt more comfortable talking about her experience of violence among women outside her community because talking about it inside her community would have made her feeling misunderstood and even stigmatised.

Thus, belonging to the same culture sometimes can be an obstacle for women to openly recognise that they have suffered or are suffering gender-based violence. For this reason, talking about it with women outside their home culture seems sometimes easier.

Women who had suffered gender-based violence expressed how important was for them to analyse and discuss these topics in an open way. This helped them to better assimilate their traumatic experience and find answers to some

questions and doubts that were making feel them guilty for what had happened to them. Some of the women even cried when remembering their experiences and founded the understanding and support of the other women in the group.

For those women who never suffered gender-based violence in intimate partnerships, listening to the experiences of violence of other women was at first an embarrassing situation, since they did not know how to handle such a situation. However, at the same time, they reacted by giving their best counselling or even giving their addresses and telephone numbers to offer support and time to listen more about the experiences of their group partners.

## **Implementation of Module 2: Training Meetings**

### Module 2: Timetable

The meetings of this module were arranged every Tuesday from March 20<sup>th</sup> to April 11<sup>th</sup> in SURT.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Meeting: Topics**

- Migrant women and gender-based violence: different spheres outside intimate partnerships.
- Sharing experiences of discrimination and violence.
- Identifying different spheres where gender-based violence may happen in the host country.
- Detecting types of violence in intimate relationships and their degree of visibility.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Meeting: Development**

In the first meeting, and after a greeting group activity, women themselves had to elaborate a list of the different types of gender-based violence that a migrant woman can suffer in every sphere of her life. In order to improve their capacity to observe, identify and analyse different types of gender-based violence, two different techniques were used in this meeting:

1. The participants should think about their situation as migrant women and tell in the group any other situation of their own lives, outside intimate partnerships, where they felt that there were possibilities to suffer gender-based violence or they had already suffered violence. At first, and in order to help women to identify any special situation concerning violence, an exercise of visualization was carried out.

In this way, women discussed about the facts and the situations where they had felt vulnerable and exposed to different types of gender-based violence. One of the women reported to the group her experience when arrived to Spain: another migrant person coming from the same country tried to introduce her in the prostitution, leading her to believe that this was the only route she had to obtain income easily and quickly so that she would be able to send

money to her family in her country of origin. All the women in the group identified prostitution as a type of violence which a migrated woman is very vulnerable to suffer.

## 2. Projection of parts of the film “Thelma & Louise”.

Watching some scenes of this film, women were asked to identify other types of gender-based violence. In particular, 3 scenes were chosen to be screened. In these scenes psychological violence in partnerships and violence in a socio-communitarian area were showed (scene of a rape).

After each scene, women had to analyse what was happening and give a name to the type of violence they considered that was described in the scene.

After watching the scenes, women reflected about psychological violence in partnerships and the different ways it is perpetrated, as well as physical violence.

Another important point of the discussion was the importance to recognize different signs that may help us to detect when a woman is suffering violence. For instance, women in the group expressed that they did not realize that when their partners asked them to stay at home and not go out with friends this was a type of violence.

In this meeting, women also worked together in the construction of a pyramid where the different types of violence in intimate relationships were described. They were ranged from the most subtle and “invisible” to the most visible and dangerous. Once again, a group dynamics activity was used to close the session in a relaxing state.

Pyramid representing the types of violence according to their degree of visibility and subtlety



### 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting: Topics

- The migration process and its consequences in the life of each woman, related to gender-based violence.
- To learn to enhance migrant women’s self-confidence.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting: Development

The second meeting started reading a short story, “La historia de Khalia y Mombo”<sup>2</sup>, with a view to increase women’s empathy and understanding of the various obstacles that every migrant woman can find in the host country. This story tells the experience of a couple (a man and a woman) who migrated together from an African country to a Western country where the weather and people’s habits, clothes or gestures were very different from those in their home country.

On the one hand, this story enabled women coming from Senegal, Bangladesh and Morocco to feel identified with the woman of the story, and recognise language barriers (verbal and non-verbal ones) as the first and main obstacle they had to face on their arrival to Spain. On the other hand, this story enabled women coming from Latin-America whose mother language is Spanish to understand the situation of women from other cultures and place themselves in such a situation.

One of the women from Senegal reported her experience of desperation and total defencelessness on her arrival to Spain via family reunification; the first night with her husband she had to escape from the house because he was beating her, but she was unable to ask for help because she did not know how to say even “help” in Spanish. The other neighbours were also from Senegal and told her to stay at home. She explained that this was one of the reasons why she returned to living with him.

Women agreed that at the arrival to a new country it was really important to have contact with some person of reference inside their migrant community who could introduce them in the traditions, habits, laws and support services to help women if they are suffering violence in the host country. This reference person might welcome the newly arrived women and transmit her disposition to help her in case of threatening situations.

The group took part in an exercise of visualisation to help women express themselves about their migratory process, paying attention to its different stages: taking the decision to migrate, organisation of the trip, farewell and arrival to the country of reception. Once the women had watched in their minds their migration experience as a film, they drew on a paper whatever they felt. The aim of this exercise was to allow women to express in a visual or graphic form, without words, the different emotions they had felt in the different stages of their migratory process. Women drew what these stages meant for each one and their drawings were exposed in the classroom as an art gallery, where everyone could watch what their colleagues had drawn. At the end of the exercise, women talked about what they had seen and felt by watching every drawing.

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<sup>2</sup> Lourdes Miquel in Fernández, P. and Bakea A. (2010) *Manual Salir Adelante. Prevención y sensibilización de la violencia de género dirigida a mujeres inmigrantes*. Available at: [http://issuu.com/cepaim/docs/manual\\_salir\\_adelante](http://issuu.com/cepaim/docs/manual_salir_adelante).

Women were also encouraged to write at home about what they had felt with this exercise, expressing in words all their migratory experience. Nevertheless, only one of them said she would do it, the other ones said writing was not their best way to express themselves.

The last part of the session was devoted to an exercise to reinforce women's self-esteem. Women had to think on how migrant women's self-esteem sometimes might be undermined by being exposed to situations of discrimination in the host country, due to existing prejudices about migrants. With a role-playing technique, women's participation was improved and they acquired tools to generate responses in similar situations of discrimination in other contexts outside the group.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting: Topics**

- Myths about love: cultural representations and individual conceptions of intimate partnerships.
- Helping to identify gender-based violence in intimate relationships.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting: Development**

First, women reflected on the beliefs they had on love and the origin of these beliefs. Two different exercises were used for this purpose: A first activity consisted in exposing several statements reflecting different positions that a woman could have with regards to what is love and how it should be expressed and demonstrated in an intimate relationship. Women had to indicate if they were feeling identified with the statements or not. These statements referred to situations and opposite concepts, such as confidence/jealousy in the relationship, respecting freedom/controlling the partner, having a personal space or personal activities/sharing every moment and everything with their partners, etc.

At the end of this exercise women deliberated about the position that each of them had or wished to have in their intimate relationships. The discussion included issues such as what they offer, what they expect from their partners and if there was anything as women that they would like to change in the way they relate to their partners.

With this exercise women recognised many topics about love and what kinds of behaviours are expected from a woman and a man in an intimate relationship. Women also recognised the important role of cultural traditions in the development and perpetuation of gender topics. The group came to the consensus on how traditions in almost every culture lead the community to think that a woman is not a whole and defined person without a man on her side.

To make the session more entertaining and improve visualising how beliefs about love are disseminated throughout society and its cultural expressions, we listened to a song in Spanish "*Nada valgo sin tu amor*" ("I am nothing without your love") by Juanes. After listening and singing the song (all women knew the words), they read all its verses one by one. Women expressed surprise when they

admitted that normally nobody thinks on how exaggerated and dramatic love songs are. These songs normally talk about the importance of having someone by your side to feel appreciated and what a tragedy is to be alone.

Women agreed that this type of songs and other artistic expressions that talk about love and love relationships, as movies, fairy tales, etc., constantly reflect the same pattern. This perpetuates from one generation to another the myth of an ideal but not realistic love.

Women also discussed about the importance to take distance from topics about love and traditional gender roles and attitudes that women assume as natural in intimate relationships, because most of the time those are the reasons that promote gender inequality inside the relationships.

Women who were mothers also recognized that it is also in their hands to change this kind of topics by showing other attitudes and ways of behaving and by discussing about these topics with their partners.

The second part of the session was focused on the identification of signs of alarm that may indicate that there is gender violence in the context of an intimate relationship. Women read and watched in group a cartoon (Rosalind B. Penfold 2006), which presents the different phases of a relationship: the moment when they first meet, what the woman feels for the man and how their lives develop together. This story tells the life of a woman who is suffering violence and at every scene of the comic the participants had to identify any sign that they identify as violence. This exercise was further developed in the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting.

#### **4<sup>th</sup> Meeting: Topics**

- The cycle of gender-based violence.
- Understanding why it is so difficult to escape from this cycle.
- Effects of gender-based violence in a woman's life, and specifically in a migrant woman's life.

#### **4<sup>th</sup> Meeting: Development**

In this session we continued working on the cartoon telling the story of violence to help women recognize the development of the cycle of gender-based violence in intimate relationships. This time women had to focus their attention not on the signs of violence, but on what happened before, during and after the violence act.

By analysing every stage of the cycle and its tempo, women also recognised how devastating it is for a woman to be inside such a cycle and how her defencelessness develops towards a state in which she might not be able, on her own, to go outside the cycle and need external help.

Through a role-playing activity, women interpreted different states and emotions a woman may feel when suffering violence: defencelessness, shame, fear, guilt, etc. They tried to explain by themselves why they thought it is so difficult for a woman to go out of this situation, and especially if the woman is a migrant.

The participants also had to identify all the spheres in a woman's life that are somehow affected when she is suffering violence in order to understand that their entire lives are being affected at the same time and that it might also paralyse a woman's ability to react due to high stressing situations. Women made a list of all the matters they thought were especially hard for a migrant woman if she is suffering gender violence.

It was a hard session for those women in the group who had suffered violence because it led them to remember and feel emotions of sadness, frustration and guilt. These women expressed that they did not realise that they were living in that cycle when they were suffering the violence. In fact, they claimed that it was only now, when watching the situation from a certain distance that they understood the whole process. They highlighted how weak they had felt. The woman from Senegal who previously did not want to share her experience of violence during this session she felt the need to do it, but also the trust to tell other women about her story.

Once again it was very positive for the whole group that women who had suffered violence and women who never had experienced it could discuss and learn together about different matters regarding gender-based violence.

To finalise this session in a pleasant atmosphere, women danced free all around the room trying to look at each other's eyes and telling the other participants a nice quality they recognised in them. This exercise also aimed at improving women's self-esteem.

### **5<sup>th</sup> Meeting: Topics**

- Assertiveness, communication and how to handle conflictive situations.
- Understanding the decision-making process when leaving a violent relationship.
- How to help a woman who is suffering gender violence: security measures.

### **5<sup>th</sup> Meeting: Development**

In this meeting we first worked with different role-playing techniques to help women to pay attention to their behaviour when trying to express their opinions, feelings, decisions, likes or dislikes, without endorsing guilt, but promoting freedom and responsibility about one's attitudes.

After explaining the meaning of assertiveness and the different types of behaviour that they may have when interacting with other people, each woman should observe herself, try to identify her communication style (verbal and non-verbal, listening, etc.) and consider if there was anything they would like to change or improve in that matter.

This session was very dynamic so that women could learn by doing different ways of improving their communication styles and abilities, as well as different ways to react in front of difficult and dangerous situations that might expose them to suffering gender-based violence.

Women also participated in a memory game describing security measures aimed to train them in giving advice to women who are suffering violence about how to protect themselves and how to ask for help.<sup>3</sup>

Otherwise, in this session we also practised some different techniques to help women understand that taking decisions implies a process and that we should be able to better understand each woman's individual style of making a decision, as well as pay attention to the time each woman needs to decide. Women agreed that it is very important to be patient and respectful with a woman's tempo when trying to go out of a violent relationship.

## **Assessment of Module 2: Training Meetings**

This module was, on the one hand, devoted to sensitise women on the roots, characteristics, forms and impacts of gender violence in intimate relationships, specifically when affecting migrant women and is related to the migration experience of women. On the other hand, it sought to train women in different techniques to improve their understating of a woman's psychological state when suffering gender-based violence and to improve their tools to be a mentor inside their migrant community to prevent violence and support women who are suffering violence.

The attendance to the workshop of women who had suffered gender violence was a very constructive element for the whole group. It gave women the possibility to contrast opinions, experiences, emotions and even prejudices relating gender violence. Women who had suffered violence could compare their experiences as migrant women and victims of gender violence, finding understanding and support from the whole group. Women who had not suffered violence expressed their admiration for the toughness of the ones who had. They valued the fact that, despite having suffered violence, they were now encouraged to fight against inequality and help other women in the same situation.

Understanding all the implications and effects that gender violence has in a woman's life reinforced women's motivation to being a woman mentor in migrant communities, in order to avoid the loneliness and defencelessness that a newcomer migrant woman might suffer, due to both her condition of migrant woman itself and her condition of being suffering violence.

By training different social skills, expression of emotions, opinions or conflict management, women could learn new tools to stand up for gender equality.

Women recognized the importance of being sensitive to specific cultural features when trying to improve gender equality. This was achieved by both discussing the issue of gender-based violence in intimate relationships and providing training on different techniques to empower women. They indicated

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<sup>3</sup> Handbook "Tackling gender violence in prison" SURT, *ALTRA* project.



the importance of paying attention to some actions that within a specific culture are seen as normal, but in another cultural context may be inappropriate. Women discussed and agreed that women coming from countries with strong religious rules may not express themselves so openly about their private problems in intimate relationships as women coming from other countries. All the participants of the group agreed that it is very important for each one to be careful with their manners and interactions when trying to acquaint women of their own communities with women's rights or when talking about the possibilities to be more independent or autonomous.

Training different ways to handle conflict or to express meanings or feelings also contributed to reinforce the links among the women in the group and to improve the knowledge of each other and specific cultural topics and subjects.

Finally, women could appreciate the importance of knowing different ways to help a woman who is suffering violence, because not everyone expresses itself in the same way and what is helpful for someone may not be helpful for someone else.

Participants considered that it was very helpful for them to recognize which are their best styles and ways to express themselves and how to be sensitive to detect different expressions a woman may have when trying to help her.

## **Implementation of Module 3: Self-Help Groups**

### **Module 3: Timetable**

The meetings of this module were arranged every Tuesday from April 19<sup>th</sup> to May 15<sup>th</sup> in Surt.

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Meeting: Topics**

- Knowing women's support networks from a transnational perspective.
- Resources and services supporting women.

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Meeting: Development**

The meeting started with an activity called “diagrams of migration”,<sup>4</sup> which aimed at raising awareness among women about the psychosocial process of migration, the migration grief, and how they affect the whole emotional state of a person.

Each woman had to individually reflect on the areas that gave meaning to her “world” in her home country: people, places, work and profession, hobbies, etc. In a circular diagram, with 6 concentric circles, each woman had to write all the

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<sup>4</sup> Fernández, P. and Bakea A. (2010) *Manual Salir Adelante. Prevención y sensibilización de la violencia de género dirigida a mujeres inmigrantes*. Available at: [http://issuu.com/cepaaim/docs/manual\\_salir\\_adelante](http://issuu.com/cepaaim/docs/manual_salir_adelante).

supporting persons, institutions, cultural beliefs, traditions and values she had in her home country.

Once every woman finished her diagram, we shared it within the group. By explaining what happened in every circle and the persons involved, women should remember and assess the physical, personal, social and cultural spheres that constituted their world, their reference frameworks, the mirror that helps them to define and assess themselves, etc.

This exercise arose many memories and emotions among participating women. The group reflected on the things that everyone had left behind and all the changes that the migration process had brought about in their lives. Then, a second diagram was drawn by the women doing the same exercise with circles representing the physical, personal, social and cultural world that women had in the host country.

Comparing both diagrams it was possible for the women to observe the differences between the supporting networks they had in their countries of origin and the supporting networks that they had in the host country. Women realised how the first diagram showed circles full of names of persons who were very important in their lives (family, friends, neighbours, school friends, work colleagues, etc.), as well as the presence of institutions, symbols and values that meant a lot for them (a football team, a landscape, etc.).

By contrast, in the second diagram many gaps remained empty for most of the women. There was no family in the host country except the children or the husband, in the case of women who were not separated, there were few neighbours to trust, few institutions, few places they felt as significant in their life, a lack of shared traditions, etc.).

Women in this group who migrated alone and as their own decision (20% of them) were able to express more positive feelings about what they had expected and found throughout their migration process: they assessed gains and learning in the new context where they were living, without forgetting what they had left behind. By contrast, women in the group who migrated through family reunification (80%) usually expressed negative feelings associated to their migration process. Sadness and frustration were the deepest emotions women described when talking about this process.

Women were invited to reflect on the different strategies of adaptation that each one had developed, and on the importance of being able to integrate past experiences related to their origins with the experiences in the new context they lived in.

Finally, women tried to represent together in another diagram which supporting networks they would like to have in the host country if they were experiencing gender-based violence. In this exercise, women in the group who had suffered this experience listed some of the social services where they found help, and how they contacted these services, describing the difficulties they found when looking for that help, due to the lack of knowledge of laws, available serv-

ices, and reference persons (family/friends) who could support them in the whole process of searching for help and counselling.

At the end of this exercise, a handout listing the different specialised services addressed to women who suffer gender based-violence, referring to psychological support, legal advice, and specific support for migrant women was distributed among the participants.

This session was closed with an easing exercise in order to allow a pleasing farewell to the women after having experienced such intense emotions.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting: Topics**

- Human rights and laws protecting women.
- Importance of the feminist movement and the achievements of women throughout history.
- Being a mentor to women in a community.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting: Development**

The first part of this session was more theoretical. First, women received documentation regarding human rights in general and women's rights in particular. Some of these rights were read and commented on the group to discuss if these rights were comparatively respected or not in different countries and societies.

On the other hand, women received documentation about the achievements that throughout history had been gained in terms of gender equality, thanks to the efforts of many women, both well-known and anonymous. Women in the group once again agreed that the different rhythms in the development of each country interfere in achieving gender equality but that it is in the women's hands to impulse social changes addressed to obtain gender equality and the same rights for men and women, as women are active social agents acting from all social positions: as mothers, as daughters, as wives, as students and as workers in different paid jobs.

The second part of the session was more dynamic. Through a role-playing game, women in the group represented a situation of a migrant woman who was suffering violence. They also represented the different agents in her community from whom she had to receive help and all the steps that she had to do to get this help. One of the roles that women played was the role of a woman who is a mentor in the community and they had to represent how she would handle this situation. At the end of this representation women received a feedback on how everyone had performed her role.

With this exercise, women could share all the knowledge acquired in the workshop, practicing what they learned in the previous training sessions on how to help a woman from their own community suffering gender-violence, as well as familiarizing themselves with the services and resources that were offered in the handout at the end of the previous session.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting: Topics**

- To promote the social participation of women as active citizens.
- To promote self-help networking among migrant women, motivating women to collaborate with other women to work towards common goals.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting: Development**

In the previous session women were requested to bring for this last session different ideas of potential activities that they, as women and as migrant women, could do or put into practice in their leisure time.

From previous sessions it seemed that women tended to move in closed circles within their migrant communities, and then facilitators motivated them to look for information in different media (TV, radio, the Internet, press, information brochures), as well as friends, acquaintances or neighbours. Women had to search for activities that they would like to do, even if they were not taking place in their local communities.

Participants exchanged information collected by themselves and explained the different ways they had sought it, discovering that they had many resources and free activities which they did not know they had access to, for instance, some music concerts in cultural centres, dance festivals, film or theatre in the city, art exhibitions, or conferences about political or literary topics. This way the participants managed to share their common interests, which could contribute to the maintenance of the group in the future.

For this session women should also agree on a “final work” to help migrant women to find support if they were suffering gender-based violence. For this aim, the group designed an information leaflet addressed to migrant women of any community and of any educational level, providing information on the main services that they have regarding gender-based violence.

Below there is an approach to the design that women decided for the leaflet, where some messages are written in the different languages they speak (Spanish, Urdu, French and Arabic), to encourage women to look for help.

During this session women also agreed to create a private Facebook group, restricted to them, which would allow them to keep in touch and share information on any subject that may be of interest for them (e.g. alerts about employment opportunities, courses, bank of time, bank of resources, cultural activities, sharing their first experiences if they were able to act as mentor in their communities, etc.). Women decided to name the Facebook group “Mujeres guerreras” (“fighting women”), as they decided that they all were very energetic women. Women selected this photo with their hands symbolizing their toughness as the image for their Facebook group.

On the second part of the meeting, women tried to describe the route that a community mentor should pursue to raise awareness and become a reference person in her community. After analysing different possibilities, women decided that the most realistic and nearest way for them to contact other women in their



Leaflet created by participants

Image representing the participants' Facebook group



communities was throughout the informal exchange of resources and services with other women, an experience that almost all of them were already developing in their communities. These experiences included cleaning in exchange for use of the Internet, ironing or sewing clothes in exchange for a room, taking care of children in exchange of time for themselves, to assist to a course, to an important appointment, to a job, etc. Women usually performed these activities between neighbours or friends from the same countries, which give them the opportunity to talk.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting: Topics

Closure of the workshop: to make a global revision of the sessions and its main contents and to give and receive feedback of the whole process.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> meeting: Development

In the last session, several activities were carried out aimed at gaining feedback from the participants on the usefulness or the programme, trying to evaluate not only how much knowledge they had gained about the objectives, but also the means and tools that the workshop had provided them.

By way of farewell, the participants carried out an activity consisting of giving each companion a symbolic gift: describing in a sentence the meaning that

the presence of each one had had for the group. The gifts were hung on the backs of each one as the picture shows:

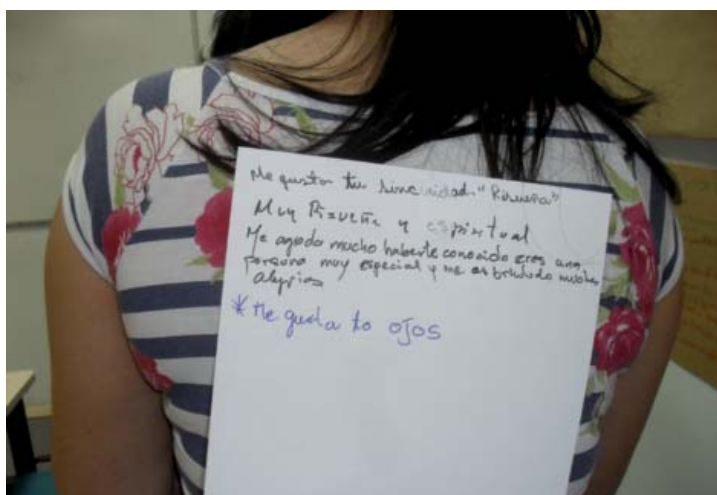
All women also expressed openly in the group what her participation had meant for herself, the acquired learning outcomes and her satisfaction with the workshop.

All in all, this last session was faced as a ceremony not to say goodbye, but to initiate a new phase in women's lives, with feelings of affection and illusion to continue.

### Assessment of Module 3: Self-help Groups

First, this module aimed at strengthening the qualities and competences that from the first meeting women were conscious they had. Secondly, this module sought to provide women with information and training, as well as motivate them, to actively take part in their citizenship and work together to obtain gender equality by promoting the creation or supporting networks among women. Thus, we tried that women could recognize by themselves the networks they had in the host country, as well as the importance of taking advantage of these networks to multiply the impact of what they learnt in the workshop.

Women expressed that they had not been aware earlier of the potential of these networks, as a source of great help for themselves in their migration process. For those women who were living migration as a frustrating experience, the reflection on their current situation in the host country helped them to perceive themselves in a more positive way, and to value the realization of other activities and initiatives that they had never carried out in their home countries. The exchange of information and experiences among participants became very valuable when it was made visible that all women had the capacity to establish contacts with women of their communities and to admit that these contacts could be used not only to improve their living conditions but also to participate in the promotion of the equality between men and women.



Women's symbolic farewell gift: what each woman meant for the group

During the last session women were asked about their satisfaction with the workshop in order to know if the workshop was adapted to the women's needs and demands and the achieved results compared with the expected ones. Women specially valued the participation in the workshop as an example of creation of supporting networks, since until then they had had no opportunity to share and exchange experiences and deep emotions, being all migrant women. They valued the understanding of all colleagues, as well as the feeling that participants had a common aim they could apply both in their own lives and in the lives of other women.

These are some of the statements of women when asked about their satisfaction with the workshop:

*These workshops should be realized by more frequency to give the opportunity to migrant women of different countries to meet each other and to be able to think about topics that are important for us.*

*Thanks to this workshop I can commit to help women who are suffering violence.*

*I have found new ideas to continue forward, applying them to my own life and in the life of other women.*

*I have found respect and freedom to express my own opinions.*

*I have found friendship with women of other countries and cultures.*

An exchange of impressions about the process and relationship took place and the facilitator gave feedback on the process, taking into consideration the quality of the bond, the confidence achieved, and the changes and evolution in the way of thinking, feeling and acting throughout the sessions.

### 10.3. General Assessment of the Workshop

The implemented workshop followed closely the original planned structure, but it was necessary to carry out slight adjustments. As the sessions were made for the participants, it was essential to be flexible to reformulate actions so that they fit the needs, language, profiles and responses to what was happening in the workshop. After each session, the facilitators did an evaluation of the session and added any variation that could be useful for the next, depending on the point at which the last one finished. For instance, if women exposed their own experiences relating to gender-based violence, it was necessary to change the rhythm of the sessions to attend this specific need.

Both the levels of participation and attendance were very high. All participants took part enthusiastically in all kinds of activities and were open to cooperation with each other. As a result, all the activities could be carried out successfully. This way, activities were not isolated but each new activity could build on the experience and the lessons learned from the previous ones.

Concerning the overall duration of the workshop and its format, on the basis of the Catalan experience, facilitators suggest that it should be extended with 2 or 3 sessions more. Although during the workshop all foreseen topics were tackled, the fact of having more sessions would allow more time for going in-depth to key concepts and introducing more activities to increase reflection and discussion. Regarding the format of the activities, the workshop experience (at least with this group) showed better results with image-based activities than with writing-based exercises, where women had more difficulties to express themselves. In parallel, facilitators also point out the need and opportunity for carrying out more activities outside the room. In this sense, activities such as visits to other organisations and exhibitions dealing with gender and migration issues may be included.

Women had an open time in the last session to express themselves on how they had felt, what made most sense for them in the workshop, what they had missed, if they thought they achieved the expected results, if they would recommend the workshop and if they felt self-confident to act as mentors in their communities. As the women themselves explained, the workshop seemed to answer to an existing women's need. All of them joined the workshop on the basis that they had an individual motivation and goals related to the workshop objectives: e.g. to help themselves, in the case of participants who had suffered violence, to help other women in their close environment (e.g. a sister in the same situation, as it was the case of one of the women), to learn more about the issue, to be able to help other women in their community or to feel that they were competent enough to be helpful.

They also found that human rights and feminist approach towards gender-based violence are relevant as a tool to for interpreting their own and each other's individual experience. The socio-educational framework of the workshop allowed for greater confidentiality among the participants and personal decisions affecting their future life, e.g. the type of relation that they had with their partners or if the education that they were giving to their children was contributing to promote the gender equality or not.

It is also relevant to note that during the course, more and more women admitted suffering violence. This may be related to several factors: an enhanced ability to identify violence after the training, which widened their definition of what can be understood as violence; a heightened empowerment to speak out developed throughout the course, and a higher level of confidence, cohesion and bonding between the participants in the group, which helped them to reveal their intimacy.

The fact that the group comprised both women who had suffered violence and the ones who did not was also a positive experience in this case. Women who had suffered gender-based violence expressed how important was for them to openly analyse and discuss these topics. On the other hand, or those women who never suffered gender-based violence in intimate partnerships, listening to the experiences of violence of other women was at first an embar-



raising situation, since they did not know how to handle it. However, at the same time, their reaction was to provide the best counselling they could, and getting to know them proved to be an invaluable opportunity to understand the real process and effects of gender-based violence and prepare them for future mentoring practice.

Even though the course was originally aimed at promoting mentoring in different culture/migrant communities, the experience of a multicultural women's group was very positive in itself. First, belonging to the same culture seemed to be sometimes an obstacle for women to openly recognise that they had suffered or are suffering gender-based violence due to issues of confidentiality and fear that their experiences are revealed among their relatives, neighbours and community. However, creating an intercultural women's group allowed the creation of a confidential atmosphere among peers and "escape" own cultural groups, which in turn produced more freedom to speak out about gender-based violence issues. The multicultural composition of the group also provided opportunities to:

- Enhance the bond among women of different migrant backgrounds.
- Contrast gender stereotypes in different religions and cultures (and not only having the host country culture and religion as a measure to compare to).
- Compare gender equality and feminist movements all over the world.
- Contrast different perceptions of the host country culture among women from different cultures, countries of origin and religion (for example, gender equality in the host country).
- Understand how reality may be perceived in different ways and introduce an intercultural approach to interaction.

The common female migration experience allowed women to understand both their common background and the diversity in migrant women's experiences, as shown, for example, in the different perceptions of migration as a positive or negative experience (it was valued positively especially among those women who migrated voluntarily and/or alone). Diversity also opened their minds to some aspects that they never had thought about before: to have the opportunity to speak openly about topics that in some cases, due to their culture of origin, are a taboo in their family or communities.

Women also agreed that, once arrived in a new country, it was really important to have contact with some persons of reference inside their migrant community who could introduced them in the traditions, habits, laws and support services to help women if they are suffering violence in the host country. This reference person might welcome the newly arrived women and transmit her disposition to help her in case of threatening situations.

The workshop also attempted to open the meaning of violence outside violence in intimate partnerships, which is an area which should be further explored in future workshops.

In conclusion, the structure of the workshop, the frequency of the sessions, the methodology and even the size of the group facilitated that all the participants progressed towards a deeper understanding of their experience as migrant women and, in some cases, as women who had lived gender-based violence. It also helped to empower themselves in their own lives and to act consciously as active women in the host country, inside and outside their migrant community. Plans to keep in contact upon the workshop were also perceived as another achievement of the workshop.

#### 10.4. Public Seminars, Dissemination and Future Activities

The Catalan team organized one public seminar in Barcelona in November 2012. A second one is scheduled for February 2013, as the closing event of the whole project.

The first public seminar in Catalonia was held on Wednesday, November 28<sup>th</sup> 2012. This seminar was conceived as the main dissemination event of the project in Catalonia. The proximity of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign provided a good opportunity for dissemination, with the issue of violence against women high on the public agenda.

The title of the seminar was “Professional challenges to address violence against women in intercultural contexts”. The programme included an extensive description of the two main activities of the project *SPEAK OUT!* (research and workshop with women). Presentations were carried out by two members of the *SPEAK OUT!* team in Catalonia: one researcher and one workshop facilitator. The seminar also included the participation of Bakea Alonso (CEPAIM), involved in the Spanish team of the project.

The seminar also tried to go beyond the boundaries of the project and include presentations of other projects carried out by the SURT Foundation dealing with intercultural issues of addressing violence against women, such as a research project on violence against women in the Roma communities, as well other experiences and recommendations for professionals regarding violence prevention and intervention programmes with intercultural groups of women. The detailed programme and participants of the first public seminar was the following:

##### **Presentation of the seminar:**

- Sònia Moragrega, SURT Foundation.
- Sandra Blanch Vidal, La Caixa Social Welfare Foundation.
- Montserrat Solé, Family Secretariat of the Department of Social Welfare and Family of the Catalanian Government.

### **Understanding the diversity of experiences of sexist violence. Approaches from research:**

- “Sexist violence against migrant women. Conceptualizations of migrant women and professionals – the *SPEAK OUT!* project. Laura Sales Gutiérrez, SURT Foundation.
- Sexist violence within Roma communities. European comparative among results of research in Catalonia, Italia, Bulgaria and Romania, the Empow-air project. Núria Francolí Sanglas, SURT Foundation.

### **Experiences of violence prevention and recovery with women’s groups:**

- “A group of migrant women: Diversity of women, common life-experiences, *SPEAK OUT!* project. Pilar Quevedo, SURT Foundation.
- “Groups of recovery of gender-based violence survivors: the programme Violence: Zero tolerance)”. Oriana Novau, SURT Foundation.

### **Strategies for intervention in front of situations of sexist violence in intercultural contexts. Recommendations for professionals:**

- Saray Bazaga, Surt Foundation.
- Bakea Alonso, CEPAIM Foundation (Madrid)

### **End of the seminar:**

- Mar Camarasa i Casals, SURT Foundation.

Attendance was a success, with 83 participants from a variety of backgrounds (gender equality and women’s support professionals, social workers, immigration professionals, anti-violence professionals, health professionals, psychologists, mediators, etc.). After the round tables, a rich discussion ensued, proving the widespread interest on the challenging issue of addressing violence against women in intercultural contexts. Attendees commented on the innovative character of the research and intervention initiatives presented and the need to further explore both aspects in the future. Contacts were made to organise other activities about the same topic and possibilities to work together opened.

The second public seminar in Barcelona is scheduled for February 2013, at the end of the project, in order to present at a local level the final results of the project in Catalonia and continue establishing networks in the local area.

Intermediate seminar  
presenting the experience  
of the project in Barcelona,  
November 2012.



## **SUMMARY. The Spanish Legislative Framework**

Equality between women and men is formally recognized in the Spanish Constitution (1978) and the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia (2006).

Migrants' admission in Spain is regulated under the law on the rights and liberties of foreign nationals in Spain and their integration. In general terms, the frequently modified legal provisions (2000, 2004, 2009) have gradually limited conditions of entry, while remaining discriminatory in terms of their denial of citizenship. Catalonia does not have legal capacity to act in this area.

Refugees' admission in Spain is regulated under the recent 2009 Law on the Right to Asylum and subsidiary protection, with very restrictive requirements.

Regarding legislation on VAW, in Spain the most important legislative document was the 2004 Spanish integral law on gender violence, which defined the concept of gender violence and introduced important measures. Courts specialized on violence against women were created, and the right to integrate social support and free legal advice to victims were recognized.

In Catalonia, a law for the right of women to eradicate sexist violence was approved in 2008. It should be emphasized that the scope of the Spanish and Catalan law is different: the Spanish law has criminal implications for perpetrators, while Catalan law mainly plans the integral coordinated political instruments of public administrations to prevent and address situations of violence.

Both legal instruments clearly situate violence against women as a product of gender inequality in society, but there are significant differences:

- The Spanish law focuses on the concept of "gender violence" and defines it exclusively as intimate partner violence, exerted by male partner or ex-partner, regardless of the fact that they live or have lived together (which implies going beyond the concept of "domestic violence").

- Catalan law refers to the concept of "sexist violence" as violence that is perpetrated against women as a manifestation of discrimination and situation of inequality in the framework of a system of power relations of men and women and which, produced by physical, economic or psychological means, including threats, intimidation and coercion, results in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering, whether it is produced in the public or private spheres.

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### 11.1. Group Discussions (Phase 1)

#### Generating Preventive Dynamics

City	Madrid
Dates	January 10th to 16th 2012
Schedule	10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Duration: 15 hours
Centre	CEPAIM-Madrid (c/Marqués de Lema 13, sótano 1)
Trainer	Paula Nogales Gutiérrez

For this first phase, a meeting was held with a group of migrant women. The objective was to have a round of conversations with them that would enable us to assess needs in issues regarding gender equality and violence. It was also useful in laying groundwork for contents for the training activities to be held in Phase 2.

Dissemination Material	Poster
Dissemination completed	Mailing and interviews with different organizations, resources, services to present the project and to enable cross-referrals. Services or organizations contacted: Equality agents, Comprehensive Care Centres, CEPI, CAIL, CAF, social services, CASI, women's associations (Amalgama, Pachamama Day Centre, Sedoac...), social intervention and/or migration organisations (CEAR, Red Cross, AHIT, Fundeso, ASJUM, MPDL, Ferine...), specific gender violence organisations/services (Federación de Mujeres Progresistas, Proyecto Esperanza, Gender Violence Regional Observatory Points, women's services in city councils...), neighbourhood associations... Networks and working groups (Red Wanawake –gender and interculturalism – working group on migrant women and gender violence, EAPN...).

## Group Formation and Composition

Date of birth	Country of origin	Level of education	Comments
10/10/1965	Bolivia	Vocational Training	
08/17/1981	Nigeria	University	
08/08/1970	Nicaragua	Vocational Training	
04/22/1968	Bolivia	University	
04/07/1954	Colombia	Secondary	
06/22/1965	Costa Rica	Primary	
07/09/1975	Colombia	Compulsory Secondary	Withdraws for family reasons
09/29/1949	Dominican Republic	University	
05/14/1962	Ecuador	University	

## Workshop Presentation

Workshop date	December 23 <sup>rd</sup> 2011 at 10:30 a.m.
Issues addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Workshop presentation: project, objectives, contents and methodology.</li> <li>b) Participants' introductions.</li> <li>c) Defining the workshop calendar</li> </ul>
Number of participants	6 women
Incidents worth noting	Fewer women attend than were originally confirmed. Very motivated to attend the workshop.

## Module 1: Reflecting on Gender

Workshop dates	January 10th and 11th 2012
Issues addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Group introductions and self-knowledge.</li> <li>b) Key concepts: sex-gender.</li> <li>c) Characteristic of inequality: stereotypes and gender roles</li> <li>d) Influence of gender in our daily lives.</li> </ul>
Number of participants	9 women
Incidents worth noting	Start-up is delayed one day, since 18 women were confirmed, but fewer than half showed up the first day.



## Module 2: Violence against Women

Workshop dates	January 11 <sup>th</sup> and 12 <sup>th</sup> 2012
Issues addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) What is gender violence?</li> <li>b) Types of violence.</li> <li>c) Myths and false beliefs about violence against women.</li> <li>d) “Good treatment”.</li> <li>e) Gender violence and migrant women.</li> <li>f) Spousal and intimate partner abuse: one more type of violence against women.</li> <li>g) Masculinity, control and gender violence.</li> <li>h) Legal framework for gender violence.</li> </ul>
Number of participants	8 women

## Module 3: Empowerment and Other Models

Workshop dates	January 13 <sup>th</sup> and 16 <sup>th</sup> 2012
Issues addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Other women’s role models, through fairytales: Cinderella and Red Riding Hood</li> <li>b) Empowerment</li> <li>c) Intercultural Lunch: “A bit of us”</li> </ul>
Number of participants	8 women
Observations	Evaluation questionnaires and diploma presentation. Closing lunch with typical dishes brought by participants from home, their own country or family.

### Main Changes Perceived in the Participants

*I was weak and my self-esteem was very fragile. Now even physically I feel more confident than before (...). Happy.*

*I hardly knew anything at all about support centres for abused women, (and now I believe) they have a lot to share and to teach about these issues, with women who have no orientation regarding women’s rights.*

*It was the best that could’ve happened to me, I feel that as a good listener I’ve participated and taken the positive from my classmates and made it part of my own history. Friendships have extended beyond the New Year, and I shall keep them. I also know that I have taken a weight off my back, this encourages me to keep exploring more on this subject since it’s very interesting.*

*Now that I have something that I can (...) personal help that I have problems of gender violence with my partner.*

*In the workshop, we can touch on lots of issues, those presented by the coordinator and those shared by classmates.*

*At the beginning before I had my doubts about what is a) feminist, b) gender, c) empowerment. Now I think I've got them quite clear these points a, b and c and, in identifying these phases, they are a strong support for me daily as I claim my space as a woman and as a person within my family and in the society, where I also participate and I am a protagonist with regards to gender-empowerment.*

## **Comments and Observation by the Trainers**

The development of the workshop was very satisfactory. The group was very heterogeneous with regards to age, country of origin, time in Spain, training and profession... Cohesion came easily. There was a heightened interest in the subject as well as a great disposition to relationships. Actually, in just a few days they generated support networks which seem to have continuity in the future. There was time enough to address all the contents and these were assimilated easily by the group, despite the many myths and preconceptions in their beliefs about gender violence. Additionally, a few situations of gender violence were detected in their own couple relationships with spouses or intimate partners, of which they themselves were unaware. Attendance was regular, with a few delays at starting time.

Forming the group was complicated because there was a group of 18 women enlisted who for different reasons (work, financial, work-life balance ...) were finally unable to join, so the group was down to 9 women and we delayed starting the workshop for one day. Participants have also raised requests for future activities:

- Retraining
- Issues about gender and violence against women, in further depth.
- Family relationships
- Self-esteem
- Basic information
- Museum visits
- Immigration Laws
- Legal regulation of domestic service employment: awareness and information on support associations

## **11.2. Training (Phase 2)**

### **Community Agent for the Prevention of Gender Violence**

City	Madrid
Dates	April 9 <sup>th</sup> to June 18 <sup>th</sup> 2012; 10 sessions
Schedule	4 p.m. to 8 p.m. Duration: 40 hours

Centre                   CEPAIM-Madrid (c/Marqués de Lema 13, sótano 1)  
 Trainer                 Paula Nogales Gutiérrez

This second phase, the longest of them all, consisted of training a group of foreign women to become, in turn, community agents for the prevention of Gender Violence among their acquaintances and nearby community.

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Dissemination Material	Poster and programme
Dissemination completed	Mailing and interviews with different organizations, resources, services to present the project and to enable cross-referrals. Services/organisations contacted: Equality agents, Comprehensive Care Centres, CEPI, CAIL, CAF, social services, CASI, women’s associations (Amalgama, Pachamama Day Centre, Sedoac...), social intervention and/or migration organisations (CEAR, Red Cross, AHIT, Fundeso, ASJUM, MPDL, Ferine...), specific gender violence organisations/services (Federación de Mujeres Progresistas, Proyecto Esperanza, Regional Observatory Points of Gender Violence, women’s services in city councils...), neighbourhood associations... Networks and working groups (Red Wanawake –gender and interculturalism-, working group on migrant women and gender violence, EAPN...).

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### Methodology Implemented

Training was carried out with the support of several teaching methodologies focusing on participation and lived experience: interactive presentations, group work, body expression, group dynamics, collective case studies, audiovisuals, readings, and so on. The feminist and intercultural perspective has been a fundamental mainstay in developing this course.

Lived experience as a starting point to enable space for expressing and sharing feelings, thoughts and experiences; and with each participant’s active reflection, to question the gender system and initiate true social transformation.

## Module 1: Reflecting on Gender

Training dates	April 9 <sup>th</sup> and 16 <sup>th</sup> (session 1 and 2)
Issues addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Key concepts: sex-gender</li> <li>b) Characteristics of inequality: stereotypes and gender roles</li> <li>c) Influence of gender in our daily lives</li> <li>d) Gender violence from a gender perspective</li> <li>e) Towards Equal Opportunities between women and men: a feminist perspective</li> </ul>
Number of participants	16 women
Incidents worth noting	Many deeply-rooted stereotypes about gender and much resistance to the concept of feminism. However, the group is very open to new perspectives and to introspection, as they begin to question the patriarchal system in everyday events: their own lives.

## Module 2: Gender Violence: Analysis and Approach

Training dates	April 23 <sup>rd</sup> , May 7 <sup>th</sup> and 14 <sup>th</sup> (Sessions 3, 4 and 5)
Issues addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Gender violence: concepts, gender inequality as a cause for violence, manifestations of violence against women.</li> <li>b) Gender violence and migrant women.</li> <li>c) Violence in couple relationships: one more type of violence against women.</li> <li>d) Masculinity, control and gender violence.</li> <li>e) Legal framework for gender violence.</li> </ul>
Number of participants	16 women
Incidents worth noting	Some previous confusion between gender violence and domestic violence, and also regarding what gender violence is in itself (when exerted from man to woman, from woman to man, from woman to woman, from man to man...) and what its causes are. Neither did they have a very clear idea of legal issues, and were very prejudiced about the law. Gradually, concepts and ideas are internalized. Two cases of gender violence were detected among the participants, which they shared with the group voluntarily.

## Module 3: Comprehensive Care for Gender Violence

Training dates	May 21 <sup>st</sup> (session 6, first part)
Issues addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Detecting gender violence: signs.</li> <li>b) The importance of networking.</li> <li>c) Caring for ourselves in order to care.</li> </ul>
Number of participants	15 women
Incidents worth noting	Not enough time for in-depth work on point b.

## Module 4: Prevention and Awareness

Training dates	May 21 <sup>st</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup> (session 6, second part, and 7)
Issues addressed	a) Basic concepts: primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. b) Social awareness-raising: change in sexist patterns, mass media and advertising, public awareness campaigns, language ...
Number of participants	15 women
Incidents worth noting	On 28 May, Bakea devotes half an hour to presenting the following phase, Workstream 4, by which one of the participants can apply for a two-month paid practicum as a chance to develop the skills acquired in training.

## Module 5: Group Intervention for the Prevention of Gender Violence

Training dates	June 4 <sup>th</sup> (session 8)
Issues addressed	a) The group as a space of privilege for change. b) The feminist perspective in group intervention. c) Key for managing the group: communication skills, empathy d) The trainer's role.
Number of participants	14 women
Incidents worth noting	Points c and d were addressed through body work, which was highly appreciated, and created a very relaxed and warm atmosphere.

## Module 6: Designing Your Own Prevention Workshop

Training dates	June 11 <sup>th</sup> and 18 <sup>th</sup> (sessions 9 and 10)
Issues addressed	This module was held as a group workshop on prevention of gender violence with women, by experimenting with different phases of the design.
Number of participants	14 women
Incidents worth noting	Three different workshops were designed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Group 1: Workshop “New Horizon”, aimed at women, preferably migrants, for dealing with different problematic issues related to the crisis.</li><li>– Group 2: Workshop “Among Us”, aimed at women, preferably migrants and single mothers, for further empowerment and educating their children for prevention of gender violence.</li><li>– Group 3: Workshop “Caring for our welfare”, aimed at migrant working women in domestic service, as it seems there is a greater vulnerability to suffering gender violence.</li></ul> The course was closed with a celebration on the 18 <sup>th</sup> . Participants presented their work in public, as a way of inviting their friends, family, partners and acquaintances... to attend the close of the training course.

## Sporadic Collaborations on Specific Issues

<b>Name of collaborator</b>	<b>Olmo Morales Albarrán</b>
Profession, experience	University degree in Sociology. Presently preparing his doctoral thesis on the subject of “New Masculinities”. Professional experience in the design and development of workshops on Equal Opportunities between women and men; as well as other workshops: “Patriarchal privileges”, “Micro-male chauvinism in the couple”, “Awareness and prevention of school bullying”.
Date of collaboration	May 14 <sup>th</sup> 2012
Subject addressed and Programme	“Masculinity, control and gender violence”
Issues worth noting	During the session, work focused on men’s resistance to change toward Equal Opportunities, as a result of gender stereotypes. The discourses of different men’s groups/collectives/associations that focus on equality in their statements. And, finally, a few techniques were presented for balancing out the participation of men in mixed groups.

<b>Name of collaborator</b>	<b>Dolores González Guerra</b>
Profession/experience	University degree in Law and Postgraduate: University Expert in Abuse and Gender Violence. Lawyer at Federación de Mujeres Progresistas. Author of several publications and presentations on gender violence.
Date of collaboration	May 21 <sup>st</sup> 2012
Subject addressed and Programme	“The legal framework for gender violence”
Issues worth noting	Questions addressed related to current legislation in this matter: The Comprehensive Law against Gender Violence, pressing charges and protection orders, and judiciary procedure and support.

<b>Name of collaborator</b>	<b>Rebeca Domínguez Asensio</b>
Profession/experience	University degree in Education with wide experience in leading group workshops with women and mixed, focusing on personal and professional development, family cohesion; she is also an experienced employment counsellor.
Date of collaboration	June 4 <sup>th</sup> 2012
Subject addressed and Programme	The feminist perspective in group intervention
Issues worth noting	During the session a few theoretical points were presented with regards to feminisms and their impertinence; as well as practical matters about how to apply feminism to interventions with groups.

## Group Formation and Composition

Date of birth	Country of origin	Level of education
10/04/1964	Ecuador	University
08/16/1958	Colombia	Vocational training
02/22/1965	Ecuador	University
06/06/1963	Ecuador	Secondary
02/13/1965	Panama	University
10/15/1972	Peru	University
03/25/1963	Bulgaria	University
08/31/1957	Ecuador	Secondary
12/27/1964	Peru	University
10/20/1963	Argentina	University
03/10/1984	Venezuela	University
07/27/1975	Cameroon	Compulsory sec.
02/15/1971	Ecuador	University
04/10/1961	Peru	University
07/10/1962	Ecuador	Compulsory sec.
08/06/1979	Venezuela	

### Main Changes Perceived by the Participants

**Speaking out against abuse:** *To speak out against abuse; And that's why we fight and to raise the awareness of women who are still in the dark.*

**Dismantling stereotypes and gender roles:** *Being a woman and being a man are cultural concepts imposed by a patriarchal system.*

**Breaking through myths and false beliefs about gender violence:** *I've learned that gender violence is in the entire social, economic and political system (...) not only within the family or in the couple.*

**Breaking through myths about feminism:** (Before the workshop I thought that) *feminism was a radical issue of some women ... (and now I believe that) they're fighting for equality between women and men. Issues related to feminism can be approached in a practical, open and dynamic way. Feminism aims to claim the feminine role to balance equality in the relationships of men and women. (Before the workshop I thought that) feminists were radical and sectarian women (and now I think that) I've always been feminist, revolutionary, a fighter.*

**Improving self-esteem:** *I'm a very valuable person. I leave feeling super empowered and happy with this workshop.*

**Personal and professional empowerment:** *Self-empowerment is the most important thing; Promoting women's potential, especially migrants (because they're more vulnerable), with the effect of spreading a culture of gender prevention.*

**Self-transformation (violet glasses):** *Everything I've heard and that Paula has transmitted I put into practice little by little in my life. Now I believe that it has been a training and transformation workshop because step by step I've been able to change the way I think, act and feel; I've been a feminist forever and today I'm conscious of how far I can go; To keep the feminist perspective not only in my job but in my life. Try to play a more active role in this transformation.*

**Self-reaffirmation:** (Before the workshop I believed that ...) *the path I had taken was right: to be a feminist (and now I believe that) I am reaffirmed and more convinced and have more reasons for it.*

**Teach what you learn:** *To speak assertively to my partners and make them aware of the violence. Give all women information.*

**The desire for learning and training:** *I've been in this workshop. I feel I have the energy, vitality, strengthening and capacity to know that I still can and must absorb all the knowledge that life has gifted me with.*

**Applying lessons learned to professional practice:** *Being able to detect cases that are often there but I'm not able to see; I've got new training tools. To include dynamics that I've learned, to include the short ones for workshop dynamics and I've learned a few keys to a positive attitude for workshop leaders; To be more attentive during interviews (to detect) to know whether behind what a woman requests there are other things that she can't communicate, "Better active participation and improvement of the organization. A stronger gender perspective in my vision. It's been very important, both on a personal and professional level. I've learned a lot about feminism, I've got a much broader, more complete and realistic perspective on gender, and I'm more active in putting it into practice in my life and at work.*



**Improving social and communication skills:** *To be more assertive at certain times (...); I've learned (...) to understand all women, without judging and contributing to others.*

Detection of cases of gender violence, both at work, in spouse/partner relationships... among the participating women.

**Open mind to new areas of work:** *The idea of fighting violence in the workplace, especially for women who have family dependents. To work as a facilitator in mixed and diverse contexts with a feminist perspective. To work with men in their own circles to raise awareness about male chauvinist attitudes.*

**Giving value to diversity:** *Learning from differences between participants.*

Support networking, both on a personal and professional level.

## Evaluation of the Trainer

### Characteristics worth noting

- Kind
- Wise
- Sensitive
- Listens patiently
- Knows how to make us open up
- Group work
- Clear expression
- Capacity and mastery of subject matter
- Capacity for creating an atmosphere for empathy
- Her feminist methodology in transferring contents
- Creative
- Organised
- Open
- Masters the field of feminism and group dynamics
- A humane professional
- Closeness
- Assertive
- Committed
- Excellent communicator
- Good-natured
- Cheerful
- Active
- Motivating
- Proactive
- Flexible

### Characteristics for improvement

- Some issues should have a broader scope
- A greater intercultural perspective

Sessions with external staff were valued very positively, both with regards to contents and to mastery of the subject, to methodology and relationship. However, some of the participants mentioned that the methodology could have included more participative dynamics.

## Comments/Observations

Results obtained in the course were very positive. Many gender stereotypes and myths about gender violence were dismantled. Most of the women expressed that, as a result of the course, they've internalised a feminist perspective in their lives and in their professional practice. Great cohesion and openness in the group to the introspection work involved in the contents presented and the methodology employed. Attendance was very regular, with no one missing more than two sessions at the most; in the event of absence, participants were responsible about notifying in time and justifying... There have only been two withdrawals: one participant found a job as a psychologist with an incompatible schedule, and another participant for personal reasons.

In satisfaction questionnaires, some of the participants noted that the course was a bit short. Comments were also made with regards to poor ventilation in the classroom and no air conditioning, which made the room even hotter.

Participants also raised requests for future activities:

- Relaxation workshop
- Empowerment / Women's empowerment
- Self-esteem
- Family relationships
- Educating youngsters and children in equality
- Leadership from the feminist perspective
- Women with life projects that are paralyzed
- To progress on issues concerning gender violence
- To promote more training courses aimed at community agents for preventing gender violence with a focus on migrant women
- Racism and xenophobia
- Intervention in gender violence
- Employment issues
- Working with migrant adolescents
- Workshops for professional retraining
- Self-management for migrant entrepreneurs

## 11.3. Self-help Groups (Phase 3)

### A Self-Leading Support Group's Experience

This phase centred on the creation of a Support Group for Migrant Women. The great novelty and contribution of Fundación CEPAIM to this phase was



that the person who coordinated this Group was one of the women who had participated in the training course (Phase 2). This experience has been very enriching for all. During selection of this person, a period of time was set in which all interested training participants were invited to present a brief project to be developed in the Support Groups. Three women made proposals, and a woman from Argentina was chosen.

**City** Madrid

**Dates** June 26th 2012

**Schedule** 3:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

**Centre** CEPAIM, Marques de Lema, 13

**Trainer** Claudia Aranda Gómez

Dissemination completed	Emails, street posters, social networking, users
Cases of gender violence detected	5
Actions with regards to the cases of violence	Follow-up, verbal containment, one-to-one interviews, referral to other resources.

## Sessions

Session 1	
Meeting date	July 26 <sup>th</sup> 2012
Issues addressed	Introductions, integration, group contract
Dynamics used	Presentation of short story, body games, brainstorming, agreements
Number of participants	16
Incidents worth noting	We decide to move to the centre at Marques de Lema for better working conditions

## Session 2

Meeting dates	August 2 <sup>nd</sup> 2012
Issues addressed	Integration body expression trust, handbook for a perfect woman...
Dynamics used	Body games, letting yourself be led, romantic love 1
Number of participants	14
Incidents worth noting	Several of the users have no experience of issues relating to gender violence and gender roles; others are trusting and share personal experiences of victimization. Work focuses on group cohesion and respect for difference. The group becomes active with the audio-visual material, which spurs an enriching debate.

## Session 3

Meeting dates	August 9 <sup>th</sup> 2012
Issues addressed	Pair dynamics, body games, introducing gender roles, romantic love 2, exchange
Dynamics used	Letting yourself be led, letting yourself fall, thematic groups, video debate
Number of participants	14
Incidents worth noting	Participants offer resistance to the idea of romantic love and couple relationships; different models for couple and family relationships are addressed; introduction to feminism. Work on guidelines for expressive movement and relaxation, empowering games.

## Session 4

Meeting dates	August 16 <sup>th</sup> 2012
Issues addressed	Integration, verbal and non-verbal communication 1
Dynamics used	Body games, broken phone, speaking without words
Number of participants	10
Incidents worth noting	Several users were absent, having left notice, because of the long weekend. Very interactive session, full of humour and creativity.

### Session 5

Meeting dates	August 23 <sup>rd</sup> 2012
Issues addressed	Micro-male chauvinism, self-esteem, empowerment
Dynamics used	Theoretical materials, role-playing, body games, self-reflection, exchange
Number of participants	14
Incidents worth noting	For the first time, several participants share their experience and new vision about gender roles, expressing a sense of awakening to a new awareness of “being a woman” and sharing everyday situations of micro-male chauvinism.

### Session 6

Meeting dates	August 30 <sup>th</sup> 2012
Issues addressed	Creativity, empowerment
Dynamics used	Drama work with home appliance cards: making the appliances come alive, acting them out and first-person storytelling.
Number of participants	12
Incidents worth noting	Very participative; a video of the action is filmed; all the women express high creativity, emotions, rich experience and lots of humor. We propose that one more session be added to the workshop for content elaboration.

### Session 7

Meeting dates	September 6 <sup>th</sup> 2012
Issues addressed	Personal elaboration, conclusions, closing, diploma presentation
Dynamics used	Charts, games, video, karaoke, poetry, giving ourselves a gift
Number of participants	9
Incidents worth noting	A touching closing session; users value the workshop very positively and express their desire to keep working on these contents.

## Group Formation and Composition

Date of birth	Country of origin	Level of education
	Bolivian	
03/09/1970	Spanish	Primary
01/12/1975	Bolivian	Secondary
06/22/1974	Spanish	Voc. training
03/23/1963	Senegal	
03/23/1963	Spanish/ Cuban	Secondary
09/03/1974	Ecuadorian	Secondary
	Ecuadorian	Secondary



## 11.4. Comparing the Experiences within the Local Welfare System and Anti-Violence Services

### Needs in Care and in Resources. What's Lacking? What's Wrong?

Resources implemented in our country to address gender violence are rather scarce if we consider the high demand for care services by victims of gender violence. In 2011 only, the feminist network against gender violence quantifies<sup>1</sup> – through an analysis of media news coverage – 178 women abused for gender reasons, whether for abuse from spouses or partners in current or former couple relationships, from other family members, for sexual aggressions, prostitution... 101 of which were killed.

Specific services such as legal, psychosocial, health care and police do not meet all the demands with the immediacy this phenomenon requires because the available funds and human resources are insufficient. Women are involved in processes that are not respected and provision is short for a new start in life outside of the situation of gender violence, which should include temporary homes, financial aid or protection for victims, amongst others. Moreover, very often professionals face the difficulty of accompanying women throughout the entire process when there is a lack of continuity in the funding of projects subsidized by public administrations, as well as a lack of private capital assigned.

The commitment to raising awareness and preventing gender violence at an early age, during childhood and adolescence, also deserves attention; however, things are not played out the same in adulthood. At this stage, empowerment work is essential with women, as a chance to dismantle myths and false beliefs about gender.

Finally, the need for specific resources should be stressed for migrant women in situations of gender violence and a set of specificities should be taken into account when designing intervention and prevention strategies.

### Specificity in the Case of Migrant Population. The Difficulties Migrant Women Face

*No work, nor documents to work, nothing to my name, 'I'm a nobody', just like my husband always said ... A Senegalese woman shares her frustration and hopelessness, after family reunification by her husband and being subject to periods of kidnapping and severe psychological violence. After overcoming her fears and doubts and pressing charges, the court assigned her an interpreter who scolded her rudely for having pressed charges, arguing that "that wasn't violence" and recommending that she "endure it, as her mother would've done". Charges were dismissed<sup>2</sup>.*

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.redfeminista.org/searchnoticias.asp?id=muertas2011>

<sup>2</sup> "Violencia de género y mujeres migrantes" by Naredo Molero, Maria in Pérez Viejo, Jesús M. and Escobar Cirujano, Ana (coord.) (2011), *Perspectivas de la violencia de género*. Editorial Grupo 5, Madrid, p. 169.

As this quote shows, there is discrimination to access a life without aggression when a set of obstacles stand in the way of plans of action for care, protection and justice for migrant women. María Naredo<sup>3</sup> states that migrant women and Spanish women share the risk of suffering gender violence; however, migrant women are over-represented in all types of aggression, including murder. Evidence is collected in the Global Survey on gender violence of 2011 by the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality<sup>4</sup>:

	Spanish Women		Foreign Women	
	Global Survey 2011	Data collection	Global Survey 2011	Data collection
Total women aged 18 and above, per City Register of 1 January 2010	100	17,522,406	100	2,245,537
Gender abuse: never	89.9	15,752,643	79.1	1,776,220
Gender abuse: some time in life	10.1	1,769,763	20.9	469,317
Gender abuse in the last year	2.8	490,627	5.8	130,241
Gender abuse: some time in life but not in the last year	7.3	1,279,136	15.1	339,076

On the one hand, as María Naredo goes on to say, migrant women's vulnerability may have developed due to social factors in their home society and/or to personal and family difficulties derived from the migration process; or rather, this vulnerability might be related to the capacity for intervention of the host State in the face of human rights violations. This is why human rights violation could be very closely linked to discrimination, not only as regards gender issues, but also other added factors, such as nationality, ethnic origin or legal residence status. For instance, women with an irregular administrative situation face legal barriers for access to any financial aid for victims of gender violence or for police contact to press charges for aggression, in accordance with migration laws.

There may be a set of intrinsic factors in women who migrate that puts them at a disadvantage with regards to others. These disadvantages may become discriminations:

- Lack of social and family networks
- Lack of interpreting services

<sup>3</sup> Idem, p. 169.

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.observatorioviolencia.org/upload\\_images/File/DOC1329745747\\_macroencuesta2011\\_principales\\_resultados-1.pdf](http://www.observatorioviolencia.org/upload_images/File/DOC1329745747_macroencuesta2011_principales_resultados-1.pdf)



- Regular or irregular administrative situation: fear of deportation, of changes in her situation ...
- Lack of confidence in institutions, which are perceived as a threat (fuelled by the abuser). Some of these fears come true.
- Difficulty as regards employment: work in precarious sectors and lack of support for work-life balance, including care of children.

### **Gaps and Needs the Training Has Attempted “to Cover”**

This phase of the project (the training) is a novelty in Spain applied to issues of gender violence; similar experiences in health promotion have been carried out by Médicos del Mundo (Doctors of the World), for example, but on this specific issue we are dealing with here, we can say we are pioneers: a Project that brings together awareness-raising and prevention workshops, with a training course for migrant women and, finally, self-help groups.

The training course “Community Agent for the prevention of gender violence” enabled professional skills training for 14 women in the prevention of male chauvinist violence at a community and social level. Theoretical-practical training was based on different contents: gender theory, violence against women, the comprehensive care approach to gender violence, prevention and awareness-raising, group intervention for gender violence and, in completing the practical part, group design of their own workshops for the prevention of violence against women. This not only raised awareness of the phenomenon of gender violence, but encouraged understanding the origin and causes of violence, as well as a general view of how to lead groups to promote prevention.

Some of the changes perceived by participants illustrate the benefits of this phase of the project well enough:

- Speaking out against abuse
- Dismantling of stereotypes and gender roles
- Breaking through myths and false beliefs about gender violence
- Eliminating myths about feminism and reappraisal of the movement.
- Adopting a different perspective: violet glasses
- Improvement in self-esteem and personal and professional empowerment.
- Applying the lessons learned to professional practice, and motivation for learning and training
- Improvement in social and communication skills
- Detection of cases of gender violence
- Receptiveness to new areas of work
- Value given to diversity
- Creating support networks both on a personal and professional level, encouraging sisterhood among women.

## 11.5. Future Proposals

For all the points mentioned above, this course “Community Agents for the Prevention of Gender Violence” must be replicated on further occasions, for new groups of migrant women, in consideration of their specificity; and also, opening the course to mixed groups where migrant and national women can work together from an intercultural perspective. It might also be interesting to impart this training with groups of professionals involved in specific fields (family, social services, migration, equality...), to enable work on the particularities of gender violence prevention work in each specific domain.

Moreover, the experience of a practicum after training is a tremendously encouraging possibility, as it helps to consolidate the knowledge acquired and take it into the field. Paid practical work could be available, or agreements could be made with different organizations willing to supply the means for students to hold workshops for the prevention of gender violence. In the case of groups of professionals, the practical part could be carried out in the workplace, with a final report upon closing.

And, of course, the results obtained from focus groups with migrant men are evidence of the need for work to be started on awareness and consciousness-raising, thus getting them involved on the road to equal opportunities between women and men.

### Other Issues and Products

#### Public Seminar

In May 2012 a Seminar was organised to present the first results obtained from research within the frame of the *SPEAK OUT!* project and from the activities developed with the women’s groups (Discussion Group, Training...). Seventy people signed up for the event, and some of the women in training were also present.

The participation of some of the training students at the Seminar held at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid in May 2012 was very interesting. They were able to see themselves as protagonists of the project, and shared their experiences and opinions.

One of the project partners, Fundación SURT, participated in this seminar and also presented their experience in the Laboratory.

It will take place in Madrid at the University Complutense of Madrid on 28 th of February

The seminar will have two different parts:

- presentation of the conclusions of the Groups Discussion. The trainer (one of the women who passed the Training) will be the person who will do the presentation

- and public presentation (for the first time) of the two publications, as a results of the project.

### **Collaboration with UCM**

Also worth mentioning is the collaboration of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid in the development of the *SPEAK OUT!* project. It is very important to encourage relations and exchange between the Third Sector of Social Action (Tercer Sector de Acción Social) and universities. Research and intervention must share feedback and nothing better for that than working on common projects.

### **Publication**

As a result of the activities implemented in the frame of the project, two publications are forthcoming:

- a) discourses of foreign men with reflections and issues that emerged from the two Focus Groups held during Research in the first part of the project.
- b) women participants of different groups present an analysis of “fairytale” which encourage and spread gender inequality, their aim being to make this visible to others. In the workshops, women were asked to “invent” other endings for these “children’s stories”.

### **Support Group is Continued: Encounter Spaces**

One very important thing is that the support group is still having meeting and the contact and exchange between the participants is going very well.

### **References**

<http://www.redfeminista.org/searchnoticias.asp?id=muertas2011>  
“Violencia de género y mujeres migrantes” by NAREDO MOLERO, MARÍA, in Pérez Viejo, Jesús M. and Escobar Cirujano, Ana (coord.) (2011), *Perspectivas de la violencia de género*. Editorial Grupo 5. Madrid. P. 169.  
[http://www.observatorioviolencia.org/upload\\_images/File/DOC1329745747\\_macroencuesta2011\\_principales\\_resultados-1.pdf](http://www.observatorioviolencia.org/upload_images/File/DOC1329745747_macroencuesta2011_principales_resultados-1.pdf)



### 12.1. Group Discussions

Group discussions were arranged by the project coordinator from the Resource Centre MONIKA. Discussions consisted of topics related to women's status and rights, migration and gender related violence. The group discussions were followed by the training meetings and later self-help group activities in 2012.

According to the project, agenda MONIKA in cooperation with the Aleksanteri Institute developed four group discussions (workstream 2) with at least 15 women. It followed a storytelling methodology: migrant women told stories about their everyday life experiences, not specifically related to personal experiences of VAW. They spoke about their knowledge and interpretations of various situations, contexts, risks of VAW in their everyday life with reference to family patterns, job experiences, migration history, etc.

Each group discussion was held in presence of a trainer and experts. Most of the MONIKA experts involved into this project were migrants.

#### The Group's Formation

In the beginning of workstream 2, there were some challenges to find migrant women for the group discussions. There were many migrant women using MONIKA's services, because they were victims of violence. Some women were still in crisis (especially in MONA-shelter) and it was the main reason why they were not ready to discuss these sensitive topics in a group (with other women).

It was also challenging to find migrant women who could express themselves in Finnish or English and who were not at work or at school during the day time, so that they could spend the whole day in the discussion group meeting. Most of the MONIKA's clients were also mothers of young children and without arranging childcare the participation was almost impossible to organize. Luckily MONIKA's staff was able to help with the childcare during the discussions. As a result, MONIKA managed to find 14 participants and there were 11-13 people present in each group meeting.

It was decided to arrange group meetings once a week, for one month. The frequent sessions seemed to work well, that is why MONIKA had planned to continue with the upcoming activities in the project in the same way.

The participants of the group discussions were women of all ages from young mothers to grandmothers. They were originally from 12 different countries (Brazil, China, Eritrea, Estonia, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Congo, Pakistan, Russia, Somalia and Taiwan). Some of them had an academic degree and some of them were uneducated. Discussion languages in the group were English and Finnish, because there was no possibility to arrange an interpreter service. It was a challenge to use two different languages and translate everything, but all in all the discussions went quite fluently. One of the participants spoke six different languages and she helped other participants with the translations when needed.

## **Topics**

The topics of the group discussions during the Workstream 2 were:

- 1<sup>st</sup> meeting: equality and the roles of women and men in Europe compared to women's home countries
- 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting: women's status in different countries, women's rights movement, gender stereotypes
- 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting: gender system, what is violence?
- 4<sup>th</sup> meeting: different forms and types of violence, how to help victims and stop violence, conclusion

## **First Meeting**

The first meeting began with a short video presented by the project coordinator about equality in the European Union. After that, the participants were asked how the things presented in the video were taken into account or arranged in their home countries. The video pointed out the following statements:

### **Everybody can make decisions themselves**

- Are boys and girls brought up differently? Do boys have more freedom than girls?
- What happens if a boy acts in a way that is not accepted in general? What happens if a girl acts that way?

### **Everybody is responsible of their own actions and everyone has the right to travel, act and go to places**

- Do women have their own money?

### **Everybody has the right to study, choose an occupation and work, men and women can study in all school forms and levels**

- Can women study even in the University if they wish to?
- Can women go to work?
- When children grow up, can they choose whichever career and occupation they want, or are there some specific occupations for girls?

**Religion is everyone's personal matter and everyone can either practice or live without it**

**Everybody can participate in society and join a political party**

- Who has permission to vote?
- Everybody can choose their own hobbies
- Are there any specific hobbies which are only for men or for women?

**Forced marriages are not accepted**

- Are boys allowed to date, are girls allowed to date and in which age?
- Are boys and girls allowed to choose their own spouses?
- What happens if a man don't want to be married any more, what happens if a woman wants a divorce?

**Everybody can live alone or with somebody without being married**

**Everybody is responsible of their own actions and choices they make**

**Everybody can decide about their own body and clothing**

- What things are only for men or only for women?

Especially women from African countries expressed that women have a weaker status in their home countries compared to European women. All the participants shared the same opinion that equality in Finland is quite good compared to their home countries. Even though, the participants thought that equality in Finland is at a good level, they still did not see Finland as an ideal society.

The group criticized the lack of communality and excessive liberty in Finland. This affects, for example on education, children's respecting older people etc. Some women also thought that children should be physically disciplined. The system of Finnish social security divided opinions. Some thought it was a good system and some argued that it causes passivity. All participants agreed that lack of Finnish language skills is an obstacle for migrant women to participate in society, get employed and stand for their rights.

Most of the women thought that there was no equality for women in their home countries because of religious and political reasons. Women told that household work is not divided equally in their home countries, men do nothing. Women felt that the divorce regulations cause inequality between sexes in many countries.

Women talked a lot about divorce procedures in their home countries. African women told that it is almost impossible for women to get a divorce. Some participants told that the situation is different for poor and prosperous women. They stated also that in some countries the decision to divorce is not

only a choice of women because kin and the whole community are involved. Some women thought that it is too easy to get a divorce in Finland. All the participants agreed that women's primary role is to take care of children. They felt that it is natural that the children stay with the mother although the father can be present in their lives in other ways.

Then the group had a "true" or a "false" quiz considering Finnish families. Red and green cards were given to the participants of the group (green for the truth and red for the false).

### **Facts about the Finnish Families in the 21st Century**

1. Women do as much household work than men in Finland.

Answer: false (Women do almost two times more household work than men (for example cleaning, cooking, childcare)

2. Women do the most of the household work also in those families, where both man and woman work.

Answer: right

3. In those families where a woman is paid more, a man does most household work.

Answer: false (Women do more household work also in those families where both man and woman work AND where woman is paid more than man).

4. Though women do more household work according to the research, men and women are satisfied with the present situation.

Answer: false (According to the research, men are more satisfied with that how household work are shared, but over 30 % of women thinks that the work distribution is unequal).

5. Finnish men do often take paternity leave in other words they stay at home and take care of children.

Answer: false (Usually women take care of the family's children at home: only few men stay at home and exploit paternity leave or parental leave).

6. Men decide how money is spent in family for example what is bought.

Answer: false (The decisions in relation to spending money, for example shopping, are usually made together, neither partner decide about these things alone).

It is important to mention, that for some women it was difficult to understand literate information in English or in Finnish although their oral language skills were good. Surprisingly although women had quite good basic knowledge on Finnish society, they had exaggerated image about the equal division of household work in Finnish families.

### **Results of the Group Discussions**

– All participants had a good basic knowledge on Finnish society, even though some of them felt that they did not know the basics of Finnish family life



- All women in the group had the same opinion that mother is the primary guardian
- Most of the discussions were held in English language.
- There were 11 participants and every one of them was from different country
- Participants' age scale was from young mothers to grandmothers
- The conversations were consensual, women dare to propose different approaches to the content
- There were also some functional parts for instance facts about Finnish society and family life (participants had surprisingly a very positive picture about Finnish equality in a household work)
- Women had the same opinion that situation about equality in Finland is quite good, specially comparing to their home countries
- Women from Africa brought out a weak status of the women living there
- According to the women's stories the division of household work is not possible in their home countries. Furthermore divorce practice is not equal.
- Finland does not appear as an ideal society in the conversations. There was a lot of criticism about the Finnish system, like a sense of community which affects for example childcare.
- Women praised, for instance, the social services system, but at the same time experienced that the social services system makes people passive
- The participants considered that the knowledge of Finnish language is very important, but language skills requirement is too high. Finnish language unskillfulness makes participation and a chance to get an employment weak.
- The understanding of the written material in English language was obviously a challenge, even though spoken language skills were quite good.

## **Second Meeting**

In the beginning of the second meeting the project coordinator and trainer from MONIKA proceeded with the discussion about equality. They also presented some facts about equality. Statistical information about poverty and inequality was surprising for many of the participants. Then they watched a short video clip about women's opinions concerning equality. After that the participants were asked how things should be in their opinion:

- Should women have as much power when it comes to decision making in a relationship. Can man decide at home?
- Should women be able to choose freely the occupation/profession they want?
- Should men get involved taking care of the children at home or not?
- Should there be as much women and men in the parliament?
- What do you think that should be told to children about the equality between men and women?
- Why the situation in equality is different in different countries?

- Why do you think that women and men are quite equal in many things in Finland?
- Why do you think that men and women are not equal in some countries?
- Education: why girls cannot go to school as often as boys?
- Why women don't do work outside of home in some countries?
- Why women do lots of household work and do not get paid for that?

After that, some facts about equality between men and women and the development of equality in Finland were presented. Women were asked to compare and tell about the development of the equality in their home countries. The participants were really eager to hear about other cultures and the equality in other countries. The participants saw that there was a connection between religious and political system or situation of the country and equality. Finnish team and the group discussed also women's rights in Finland and in other countries.

Then they watched a short presentation of the women's movement in Europe, which had a big impact on women's rights issue. Women were asked if they have something familiar with the women's movement and if they have such a thing in their home countries:

- Is there such a thing in your country?
- What do you think about this movement?
- What do men think about women who join this kind of movement?

The participants recognized the women's movement as a global phenomenon, but they thought that it is not always safe to join the movement. The women were asked if they know what feminism means and are they feminists themselves. Feminism was generally understood as a struggle between women and men. The participants also thought that feminism intends to fade the specific roles of men and women so that women cannot be women any more. After talking about feminism they discussed gender stereotypes and presented a few stereotypic statements about women and men, boys and girls and asked how did the women feel about them (they had red and green cards, so that they could choose green if they agree with the statement and red if they disagree):

- "Women can be police officers or fire fighters"
- "Men can be nurses and they can work in a day care for children"
- "Boys can play with dolls"
- "Girls can play football as a hobby. Also boxing is a good hobby for a girl"
- "Women can work outside of home even if they have small children"
- "Man has to provide for his family so that women don't have to work"
- "It is important for women to look pretty or try their best to look pretty"

The participants did not agree on most obvious stereotypic statements although almost everybody thought that it is not acceptable if a boy plays with dolls.

## Results of the Meeting

- Three new participants took part into the meeting. The conversation was in Finnish and English languages
- The group continued discussion about equality in different life situations and countries. The specific situations, religious and political points of views were taking into consideration.
- Discussion about women movements in different countries
- Gender identity stereotypes
- Insight: equality also for men
- Some women think that equality has gone too far in Finland
- Gender equality was not clearly understood as an idea of feminism, but women could openly discuss about this subject
- During discussions about feminism it turned out, that women and men to be seen having their own roles
- The negative side of the rising feminism was that women cannot be women any more
- Women did not have the same opinion about some typical stereotypes, except “that boys do not play dolls”
- Statistical information about poverty and inequality was new and shocking for most of the women
- Women were very interested in other cultures’ habits
- Wide spectrum of professor level and household women were present
- Good relaxing atmosphere, women discussed about some serious topics with a sense of humour
- Women had the courage to disagree with each other

## Third Meeting

At the beginning of the meeting, a short video clip about gender stereotypes was presented. Then the group continued for a little while with the statements that they started in the previous meeting:

- “It’s stupid and not masculine enough if a man cries”
- “Sex before marriage is wrong”
- “All women should get married and have children”
- “In a marriage woman can say no to sex even if her husband wants to have sex”
- “In a marriage woman can decide herself if she wants to have (more or any) children (woman doesn’t need her husband’s permission to use contraception)”
- “Homosexuality is wrong”
- “Gays and lesbians should be able to marry and have children”
- “The oppression of homosexuals is connected to the weaker position of women in society”

Women's opinions reflected their home countries' general attitudes when it comes to homosexuality. Many of the participants were strictly against homosexuality even though some of them had also the opposite opinion. Those who were against homosexuality plead often to religious reasons. All in all many of the women thought that homosexuality is an individual choice.

Almost everybody thought that issues and decisions related to children and having children were mostly women's matters.

Most of the participants thought that it is OK for men also to be emotional and to show their feelings. They also thought that women should be able to stay single and not to have children if they prefer to.

Everybody agreed that women should be able to say "no" to sex within marriage. "Women and men are different" statement was repeated many times during the conversation about stereotypes. Women's background and education seemed to somehow correlate with their opinions. Women with academic education were more liberal than others.

In the discussion about violence participants of the group agreed that there was a connection between violence and the weaker status of women in society in general.

Women saw violence as a mechanism of power. Some statistical facts about violence according to UN were shown to the participants. Women seemed to be surprised that the numbers were not even higher. They also stated that every incident does not show in the statistics. Violence was really sensitive subject to some of women because some of them have been victims of violence themselves.

### **Results of the Meeting**

- Women's opinions on homosexuality were on the line of participants' country of origin very radical non understanding, but from the other hand some very strong supporting opinions
- However, most of the women thought that homosexuality is a choice
- Religion was pointed out often
- Gender stereotype: majority of women thought that having children is a woman's choice and final decision
- A man showing an emotion was acceptable. However there were some disagreements. Also women's right to abstain from the marriage even though, for most of the women it is natural to get married and have children.
- All women agreed, that married woman has a right to abstain from sexual act
- Some women pointed out the importance of making decisions with a partner together in the ideal situation. The use of birth control is woman's decision, because she is the one who deals with consequences physically and mentally
- Concurring opinion during discussions was that men and women are different

- Educational background had an influence on the women’s opinions (high education correlated for instance with more liberal point of view)
- Clearer connection between generally weak status of women and violence against women
- Violence is seen especially as a tool for power
- Women were surprised about low statistics (UN statistics) and about the commonness of violence against women. They imagined that it was more common and they also wished that every case of violence would be brought forth, because not necessarily every case had been taken into account
- Discussing violence was not easy for some women, because of personal experiences

### **Fourth Meeting**

Coordinator and trainer mentioned that although violence is a difficult and sensitive subject, it is also crucial to talk about it, because silence will not make things better. Sharing one’s experiences or opinions about this subject is really important, because through this the information and aim to changing attitudes can be spread. One reason why this is so important is that many women (also men) who have been victimized by violence think that they are alone with this issue. This kind of feeling often causes shame and keeps them from talking about the topic. This will isolate them even more. It is important to remember even though we would not necessarily have personal experience about this subject, it is very likely that every one of us at least knows someone who unfortunately has.”

Although women had very different backgrounds and they have had come to Finland for different reasons, they all felt that they have not had enough information about their rights as women living in Finland. Some of the women thought that information about women’s rights should be given to men also while, some of them disagreed. However women did not agree at what stage the information should be given and what should be the instance: the police, social office, employment office or some other place.

Some commercials from the past were shown to the participants. The pictures represented women’s stereotypical roles in media. Almost everybody thought that the image of the women in media is a type of ideological violence. After that, women talked about the circle of different types of violence and women had also many practical examples of how the different forms of abuse can appear. Many women told stories about their friends or relatives and the different types of violence were familiar to women. Surprisingly, when talking about different types of violence, women highlighted that the economical abuse is the most common and also the most difficult type to prevent.

## The Violence Circle

Finally, women discussed briefly about the earlier meetings. The project coordinator and trainer made a little compaction of all the topics they have discussed in the group. The reason to that was to get to know if women have changed their minds about something or if they would like to share something else. Some of the participants said that «*the discussions have opened their eyes and it is nice to have a forum where you can talk with other women*». One of the participants who were in the beginning really critical about feminism said: «*I think that I am a feminist too*».



## Results of the Meeting

- Even though women came from the different backgrounds and the reasons of going to Finland are also different, they did not get enough information about their rights when moving to Finland
- Some women thought it was a good idea for the men to know about women’s right, but some women were against this idea
- Most of women agreed that women’s representation in media/commercials has a huge influence and that it is in fact an ideological violence
- The commonness of the economical violence

## Results of the Group Discussions: Participants

- All in all, MONIKA managed to find around 11-14 participants to the group discussions. Participants: first time 11, second time 13, third meeting 12, and last time 13
- Women of all ages, originally from 11 different countries, some of them had academic degree and some of them were uneducated
- Mother tongues: Chinese (2), Lingala, Russian (2), Kurdish, Indonesia, Swahili, French, Somali (2), Urdu, Portugal
- Discussion languages English and Finnish

Meetings included a lot of functional and orientation elements such as video clips, votes and slide shows.

## Conclusion: Equality and Gender System

Participants thought that equality in Finland is very good compared to their home countries and many women claimed that equality has even gone too far in

Finland. Especially women who came from African countries stated that they see that women's status is terribly weak in their home countries because of divorce practices, household work etc. Some of the participants thought that the equality has converted so that men are oppressed.

Women had quite good basic knowledge on Finnish society but they had exaggerated image about the equal division of household work in Finnish families

"Women should be women" – most of the participants thought that men and women should have specific roles and tasks because they are biologically different.

All women thought that mothers should be primary caretakers of children. Many women thought that Finnish women and men do as much household work which is not true.

Most of the participants were sceptical about the feminism because they felt it is a struggle between sexes and the intention is to emphasize women at men's expense.

Although women had different backgrounds and reasons why they had come to Finland, all of them felt that they haven't had enough information about their rights and Finnish laws. However, the women disagreed at what stage the information should be given, by who (police, employment agency, social welfare office) and should the information about women's rights be given to men also.

All participants agreed that lack of Finnish language skills is an obstacle for migrant to participate to society, get employed and stand for their rights.

## **Violence**

At first talking about violence seemed to be challenging and one participant said that it is difficult to talk about violence because of her own experiences.

Women recognized that there is a connection between violence against women and the fact that women are in a weaker position.

When talking about different forms of violence, women emphasized the commonness of economical violence. It is common for women not to be able use any money even though they would earn the money themselves.

Almost everybody thought that the representation of women in media is a form of ideological violence.

## **12.2. Training Meetings**

The training meetings took place between May 2012 and August 2012. The meetings were held in Helsinki, Finland, at the Multicultural Women's House, run by MONIKA. The researchers from Aleksanteri Institute were present. As per the project guidance, the venue is a safe and friendly environment in which the women felt comfortable discussing the topics.

## Participants

A total of 15 migrant and refugee women participated in the training meetings. They represented the following thirteen nationalities: The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Russia, Kenya, Serbia (Former Yugoslavia), Cameroon, Azerbaijan, Somalia, Pakistan, Mozambique, Indonesia, Ethiopia, Thailand and Estonia.

The participants were in their early 20s and late 50s. Not all women attended all of the sessions despite MONIKA's efforts to commit the women to the whole training series. The group size varied from eight to seventeen members, with the mean of twelve.

Given that a majority of the women had attended the *SPEAK OUT!* workstream 3 group discussions in late 2011, the group was relatively talkative and dynamic from the first training session on. However, most of them were victims of violence and as such were not always comfortable discussing the more intimate aspects of the training meeting topics. While few women emerged as more dominant discussants, some women remained silent throughout the sessions.

As during the workstream 2 discussion groups, varying and uneven linguistic abilities amongst the women became a challenge at times. It was decided that the training meetings were held bilingually (Finnish-English), with a staff member from MONIKA translating between the two languages. Yet often the more talkative members of the group initiated a conversation in English that not all participants were able to follow. The use of legal jargon by some of the trainers was a challenge too, in both Finnish and English. It would have been impossible to hire an interpreter as the women came from such varying linguistic backgrounds.

In addition to the migrant women and the group leaders (MONIKA's staff and external experts), members of MONIKA'S *SPEAK OUT!* partner organization the Aleksanteri Institute of the University of Helsinki attended the meetings. Some of the meetings were also attended by a community pedagogic student interning at MONIKA.

### **Training Meeting 1: Migrant Women's Rights and Specific Legislation at National, European and International Levels**

The first training meeting began with introductions and getting to know the group of migrant and refugee women. Many of the participants knew each other from the *SPEAK OUT!* workstream 2 group discussions, which allowed the conversation to flow freely. The session was run by a MONIKA Resource Centre staff member, Ms. Anastasija Kamali, who has extensive experience from the Finnish legal system.

The session offered a brief overview of universal human rights as well as fundamental rights in Finland, highlighting the centrality of human dignity as a basis for all rights. The training then moved on the women's rights specifically, underscoring how women's rights equal to human rights.



Many migration-related rights were – understandably – of key interest to the participating women. The often-complex procedures behind obtaining a residence permit as well as Finnish citizenship were explained. A large amount of the first training meeting was spent on going over the Finnish social security system from a migrant woman’s perspective. Issues such as health care, unemployment and housing benefits, and education opportunities were discussed in detail. Many of the women found the system rather complex and felt that they had not received enough information about it before. The recently updated Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Refugees seemed to further complicate the issue.

The family unit in the framework of migrant women’s rights was another theme discussed in the meeting. Within it, marriage, divorce and various different post-divorce custody arrangements of children were the three, inter-related topics that triggered most vibrant discussions amongst the migrant women participating in the training.

The migrant women highlighted how many of them did not know about many of the rights discussed, such as the right to your own bank account or the right to many Finnish policies, such as the personalized integration plan made for all migrants.

## **Training Meeting 2: Sexual and Reproductive Rights**

The second training session was run by a qualified nurse and an anthropologist, Ms. Johanna Sarlio-Nieminen, who holds vast experience of working with women from developing countries. The participants were mainly the same as on the first time, though a few new members joined. The leader opened the session with Helen Keller’s quote “Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much”, which highlighted the importance of training activities such as this in empowering women against violence. The migrant women were then encouraged to introduce themselves by telling others which quality they most appreciated about themselves, and for this reason creating a warm and friendly atmosphere in which to discuss the day’s topics. Characteristics such as determination, loyalty and positivity were mentioned by many.

The training meeting continued with an overview of the cornerstones of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), such as the 1994 UN Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the 2000 Millennium Development Goals.

The session then moved onto discussing several sexuality-related health matters such as: contraception, prevention and care of sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy, birth care, safe abortion, and finally opposing and reducing of gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices. Each of these issues sparked lively debate amongst the women, many of whom had personal experiences to refer to. It was acknowledged that many of these sexuality-related

health matters are particularly pertinent to migrant women in culturally new contexts where practices may differ drastically from those they were used to in their countries of origin.

The final section of the meeting was used to discuss specific sexual and reproductive rights: right to life; right to freedom and security; right to equality and to be free from all forms of discrimination; right to privacy; right to freedom of thought; right to information and education; right to choose whether to marry and family planning; right to decide whether and when to have children; right to healthcare; right to the benefits of new medical developments; right to meetings and political participation; and right to avoid torture and abuse. The participants were asked to choose which of the above mentioned rights they found most crucial. The right to information and education was by far the most cited one, followed by the right to choose whether to have children.

### **Training Meeting 3 and 4: Violence against Migrant Women and Migrant-Related Assistance Services in the Local Context**

Due to the similarity of the third and the fourth topics, the two themes were combined to be addressed in a single, longer-than-usual session. The arrangement was also dictated by the Finnish summer holidays and their effect on MONIKA. The session was run by Ms. Anastasija Kamali, earlier mentioned MONIKA staff member.

The meeting started with an overview of different forms of violence experienced by women: physical abuse; sexual abuse; emotional and verbal abuse; psychological abuse; and economic violence. It was discussed how some forms of violence are easier to detect and proof than others. For example, economic violence can be very invisible. Similarly, it was acknowledged that verbal and emotional abuse has never been proofed in the Finnish court system and as such remains a hidden form of violence.

Nearly all of the women who participated in the training meeting had been exposed to violence, with the perpetrator most often being the woman's husband or boyfriend. The conversation became at times very heated as the migrant women felt passionate about the topic. Many of them shared their experiences openly, telling others about how their partners had abused them physically. In addition to physical violence, economic and emotional violence seemed to be the most common forms of violence faced by the women. The idea of rape within a relationship was discussed, with some women not considering it as a crime due to the differing cultural expectations inherited from their countries of origin.

What is the difference between an argument and violence? B. from Kongo answered that in her country women experience all kinds of violence all the time.

*A woman cannot have her opinion or argue with a man there. In case a woman lives with her husband's family, she is not allowed to argue about anything.*

N. from Ethiopia said:

*Nobody calls the police in her country in case a man abuses a woman. These problems are decipherable within the family, because a wife does not belong to a man only, but to the whole his family.*

Following the discussion on different types of violence, the training meeting moved onto discussing what to do when a migrant women has been exposed to violence. The criminal process under the Finnish jurisdiction was explained by the session leader, step by step from reporting the abuse onward. Most of the women had children and were therefore particularly interested in the child's position in the context of domestic violence. Restraining orders, separation and divorce processes were explained in detail.

How do women in Kongo live under the everyday violence? In M. opinion,

*that is a big problem, because it is a common and acceptable situation for the people living there. Also a woman herself does not recognize the signs of violence.*

T. from Russia: «*Nobody can live a constant fear of being abused*».

The day concluded with an overview of the various services available in Helsinki for migrant women who have faced violence. In addition to the police and social service authorities, third sector instances were mentioned. Women's shelters, such as MONA Shelter run by MONIKA, were known by many of the participants. In general, however, the women felt that there is not enough information available on the different support mechanisms in place for victims of domestic violence. The cultural stigma attached to addressing violence within a relationship was seen as a further hindrance in making women seek help through therapeutic or legal means.

### **Training Meeting 5: Psychosocial Support Methodologies and Techniques for Women Who Are at Risk of or Suffer from Any Form of Violence**

The fifth training meeting was held on August 21<sup>st</sup> 2012 from 10.00 to 3.00 o'clock pm with the group size of twelve women. Ms. Jekaterina Tanttú continued the project work from this phase as a project manager. The fifth training meeting was run by a qualified nurse and an anthropologist, Ms. Johanna Sarlio-Niemi. She is experienced of working with women from developing countries. She also works as a midwife and offers wide range of midwifery services in Finnish, Swedish, English, Spanish and French in and near Helsinki.

The lecturer began the meeting with the idea of the importance of the physical contacts in our lives. According to her professional experience it is important to touch each other and feel close to one another. All the participants had to in-

roduce themselves by shaking hands and mentioning their favourite flower. Ms. Johanna Sarlio-Nieminen told the group that it is essential to realize that we belong to different groups, and the sense of belonging to one gender is very important. Women need each other, even though the Finnish society emphasizes independence. It is important to note that dependency also makes us powerful!

### **Story-Telling: The Participants' Lives before Coming to Finland (and for Finnish Participants, Simply a Time in the Past).**

Participants are encouraged to think of a moment when they felt powerful and happy with themselves.

Participant C. – *Finland is about being in peace. The background music feels like it has been chosen for her. It was so terrible back home. When I was a child, life was nice to spend time with my family. When I got married, it was also a powerful moment. Family, my children, husband – the time with them was very good, I was so happy. Now I am alone with the children. Now it is ok, I am seeing my friends, I see my children succeed, going to school. With or without a man, I found my peace.*

Participant B.P. – *The most important event in my life was when I had my daughter. I still support my daughter by myself. I passed the hardships; I can now smile and see that my daughter is doing well in life.*

Participant N. – *Back home the culture is so different. I have such good memories. We are always around friends and family, there is humour, laughter; there are no negative memories. The moment I graduated was the happiest moment of my life. However, coming to Finland was kind of shocking for me. It was difficult for me to get used to the culture and lifestyle here. But I have my family and the support from them. University life changed everything – a more international environment gave me a new insight to life in Finland. My belief in God makes me strong and reminds me to think about tomorrow, to see to the future, the positive things that are waiting. Nature and flowers give me a lot of energy.*

Participant M. – *I never divided my life into parts. I took my life as an adventure. There have been a lot of troubles in my life, but I needed them; they were something like the 'school of life'. Raising my children alone was hard but rewarding.*

Participant I. – *I raised my two children for six years alone. I finished my master thesis and was looking for a job. I was very happy to find new people and new job and do something I really wanted to do in life.*

Participant A. – *I think I had a lot of good moments as well. The only thing I really think defined me was when I was quite young, 20 or 21, which was quite strange in*

*Serbia because usually people stay at home until they get married. I left to China on my own. It was a bit scary at first but it ended up being the best thing I did in my life – a decision that changed my life completely. I am now pretty open to any new experiences due to my decision to live abroad and that took me to many new places I probably would have never visited before.*

Participant J. – *Every time I am visiting my home town, I go to a special place. I am surrounded by forest, and I have my ‘own place’ there. Every time I go there, this place gives me some kind of unexplainable energy, the nature, the sound of birds. I had many happy moments in my life and a lot of difficult experiences too, which have made me more powerful.*

Participant J.S. – *when I was planning this, I was thinking about a moment in my life where I would feel joyful and empowered. These experiences are also related to the feeling when you find out that you are stronger than you expected. I made a connection with a girl of my age at 14, and I saved money and bought a cheap ticket and travelled alone to the Mediterranean. That feeling of coming out of the airplane, realizing that you are alone and you can make it – that is a powerful feeling. You realize that you can manage other times as well.*

Participant A. – *I have a special memory from the time when my daughter was born. It was a life-changing experience. Also in my student years I was doing summertime jobs abroad – in Scandinavia and elsewhere. In my time it was rare to go abroad. Later I have realized that that experience empowered me and gave me inspiration and courage to make my dreams come true in student and professional life. I experienced something that I value for the rest of my life.*

Participant B. T.– *I think a picture tells a thousand words. I have chosen two pictures. I was not sure if I would be able to finish that degree. I was studying in South Africa, and having to do all the work almost killed me. My stepdad was so proud that his children were able to graduate from university. It was the last picture we took together before he passed away. The second photograph is of me and a good friend of mine. It is a snapshot of a moment spent with friends, having a great time, forgetting everything that is wrong in the world. Just for once, having a ball, letting your hair down.*

Participant J.S. – *All of these elements are moving in a way. Even though we were talking about time before Finland, sometimes it is impossible to separate these two times in life. Sometimes women go to their first birth with fear in their hearts. First experiences can be intimidating. When something you don’t know is approaching, it can be difficult to handle. We are starting with the idea that we will list all the good things that you feel are your power elements. Actually family comes into the picture in all of your stories.*

The group continued with the storytelling from the participants' lives before they moved to Finland and for Finnish participants, simply a time in the past. Participants were encouraged to think of a moments when they felt powerful and happy with themselves.

These moments were, for instance, happy childhood, wedding day, giving birth to a child, entering the University, getting a job in Finland. Every participant had a special moment or moments in their lives. These moments have a powerful feeling that makes you realize you can make it. And it also means that you can manage other times as well.

Ms. Johanna Sarlio-Nieminen added that all of these elements are moving in a way. "Even though we were talking about time before Finland, sometimes it is impossible to separate these two times in life. Sometimes women go to their first birth with fear in their hearts. First experiences can be intimidating. When something you don't know is approaching, it can be difficult to handle. We are starting with the idea that we will list all the good things that you feel are your power elements".

Actually family comes into the picture in all participants' stories.

### **Question: Have you been starting to feel at home in Finland, or somehow part of the Finnish society?**

Some women of the group are still in a process of integration into the Finnish society and some feel like they found their place in Finland. The fact is that some women feel more comfortable living in Finland that others can be explained by the longer time of living in Finland, Finnish language skills and personal experiences. Longer period of time within this group was about 5 years, seemingly enough time to understand a new culture, the Finnish language, basic rights and duties, to bare the Finish weather.

Ms. Johanna Sarlio-Nieminen:

*It is important to learn Finnish language so that you can get a working place or maybe get an education. Also personal experience is a very powerful resource for the integration into a new society.*

However, according to the lecturer people need the feeling of belonging in different ways, but we don't always have to be identified with something in order to feel comfortable.

Participant N. – *I was working in a laboratory during my studies, because I was a pharmacist back home. It gave me strength to continue my studies and prove to myself that I can make it in Finland.*

Participant K. – *I do not feel like I would be especially connected to Finland. How-*

*ever, I can see the difference to my previous life: I feel more powerful and happy now that I am divorced.*

Participant I. – *There were certain moments when I felt that people in the Finnish society made me feel like I was a part of them, and that was very empowering.*

Participant A. – *I don't know if I am yet. I feel like I am a part of a global place rather than one specific country. I know Finland is as good as many others. Sometimes it still hits you how beautiful things are, be it the sea, or a building, or nature. When I passed the YKI-test, I was so proud of myself and blown away by the result only after less than a year in the country. I think I can belong to anywhere and nowhere at the same time. I don't feel any place is like my home, really. I can make one place my own, but it also gives me power that I don't necessarily have to.*

Participant J. – *I think I had this feeling after five years of living here. Little by little you will start to understand people living in this country better. I learned the system here, how to communicate with and approach people. I have been here for nine years now and I have settled. My working life is very important to me, I can be useful, use my knowledge and my language skills.*

Participant J.S. – *In the northern hemisphere we have more possibilities to test how it feels to be in a different type of setting. I went to a work camp where I realized what belonging to different groups meant. In Swaziland there were no buses for the whites, and I started becoming very conscious of the colour. People need to belong in different ways, but we don't always have to identify with something in order to feel comfortable.*

Participant A. – *I was a teenager when I went abroad for the first time, to Sweden. It was a comfortable place to start from, and I even spoke the language. I had my first crisis when my sister came to visit me in Sweden. My sister had been robbed on the boat, and we had to survive with very little money without telling my parents know what had happened. That time Finland was very close country in many ways. This feeling of coping made me a part of that society.*

Participant M. – *I noticed that I am adaptable; that I can manage in different places and environments. One of those first moments I realized it was when I had my family over. I was able to take them around by myself, without a Finnish-speaking person. When you go out of Finland, you notice how people are loud and noisy. When I went to Mozambique, I had problems adapting back to the life there. I had become very independent in Finland. Here, you have to be able to be on your own, you have to learn how to be happy by yourself, without constantly contacting your friends and family.*

Participant C. – *When I first moved out of Congo, I moved to Morocco. The language seemed so hard to learn. Everything was so difficult. There was no work for us*

foreigners. In Finland, I immediately went to school. On the first Day, when I learnt 'Minä olen', I thought: this is nice! I can communicate with others. I wanted to integrate myself in this country. Everyone I said: I can because I want to! I have been to Finland for three and a half years. I learnt Finnish in two years. My children found good friends and made it well at school. I am happy here, because I have my job, I have my own money. With this money, I can now help the others too. I do know what I want.

Participant B.P. – I don't know yet if this is the right place for me. The first time I really felt like I was a part of this country, is when I came to MONIKA-Naiset; it changed everything in me. I was so new; I didn't know what I was supposed to do. I was so lost; I did not know the language. For the first three months, I only spent time indoors – I did not dare to go out because everything was so unfamiliar. At MoniNaissten Talo I found people from different countries who had been in Finland for a longer time. They explained me everything. I started learning Finnish and it was something I had never learnt before. But I finished a language course in Aikuislukio, and that has made me realize that I am on my way somewhere. I am inspired by the fact that we are able to get good education in Finland, and the thought of it makes me very happy. I have been accepted to study at a nursing program. Soon my daughter is coming here, and I am happy to see that my family is complete.

Participant B.T.– Before Finland, I went to University for two years before my father died. My mother did not know what to do, because she did not finish her education and was not allowed to work. My family could not pay for my schooling. This time, Congo was not an easy place to live. I left to Finland, and now I have started my own life, and I feel like I am safe. I always felt so unsafe back home. My baby has been my happiness. I am not working but I get something to eat, and I have a place to sleep. I want to start working and paying tax. I am an African woman, and I know how to cook, I know how to collect firewood. I want to do my part in the society here as well.

Participant J. – Nothing is free in life – but the possibility for sharing is present in the Finnish society. We help those who are in need.

The group continued with a drawing exercise on a theme: how does your future look like and what is your goal in life?

For the drawing exercise we used watercolours, pencils and relaxing music in the background. Participants had to express themselves in drawing their future, goals, where do they see themselves in the future life. All the participants were very excited about this exercise, because most of them did not draw for a long time. It took about 30 minutes to finish the drawings. After that every participant had to show and comment the drawing. Every drawing had an idea of a happy life, positive thinking. Some of participants remembered something negative from their past, but they stayed positive and felled mentally stronger now.



In the end of this training meeting there was an acupuncture exercise. All women were divided into small groups of three. The lecturer explained how important the physical contact is and what its effect is. Every participant had a chance to try some acupuncture techniques using each other's hands with relaxing music in the background. The end of the training meeting was at 3.00 pm.

### **Training Meeting 6: Peer support methodologies and strategies to create a self-help group for women who are at risk of or have suffered from any form of violence**

The sixth training meeting was held on the 28<sup>th</sup> of August 2012 from 10.00 till 15.00 o'clock with the group size of nine women, including two lecturers. The session was run by the MONIKA Resource Centre staff members: Ms. Susanna Perunkangas and Ms. Niina Antunovic who has extensive experience from working with support groups for women who are at risk of or have suffered from any form of violence. The theme on the meeting was: methods and strategies of peer support and it was held in English language.

Ms. Niina Antunovic began the meeting by telling the meaning of the support group, definition of support group, the goal of the support group and leader preferences. The next topic was planning a group including:

- Target group
- Language – special needs
- Open / closed group
- Informing target group
- Place
- Time
- Number of group meetings (once/week, 5 months)
- Possibility for child care
- Visiting speakers (child protection, police, social workers etc)

There were some examples of the types of support groups given by the lecturers:

- Domestic violence survivors
- AA, Al Anon, NA
- Support group for grief and loss
- Parenting groups
- Divorce groups
- Groups for people suffering from chronic/terminal illness.

### **Question: how to choose a target group, what do we need to take into consideration before organizing a self-help group?**

- it is more preferred if women are in the familiar life situation
- take into account ethnic group differences

- the participants of the varied groups should operate with each other

After that the lecturers told about the difference between open and closed support groups. Lecturers continued with the structure of support group. It included:

- Introduction
- Informative part/Topic of day
- Activities
- Discussion
- Homework
- Closing

The group continued training meeting with some question regarding the previous theme. The group members were interested in getting more information and practical advisers about how to choose a topic of the day, what kind of activities to choose and how to keep a support group without losing an interest.

**Thought experiment: imagine, you woke up in the morning and your biggest concern had disappeared. What could it be?**

Possible topics for the group discussion were given as an example. Participants of the group also had a chance to make couple of exercise for instance, “sun practice”. They were also asked to think about the topics for their future support groups.

**Question: how do you think self-help groups can support other women?**

N. said that in her opinion:

*these kinds of groups can help women to realize that they are not alone, there is no reason to blame yourself for being abused. The familiar situation unites and gives strength. It is also about removing stereotypes.*

Ms. Susanna Perunkangas and Ms. Niina Antunovic answered all the questions of the training group, giving understandable explanations and using examples of their practical experience.

**Homework Assignment:**

- List of 10 negative qualities in yourself – turn them into positive
- Calm down for 20 minutes every evening
- Write down painful-forget letter to someone

In the end of the last training meeting all the participants were asked if they are ready to start their own support groups and when. Three enthusiastic women agreed to continue participating in the project.

## **Results of the Training Meetings**

Many migration-related rights were a key interest to the participating women. The often-complex procedures behind obtaining a residence permit as well as Finnish citizenship were explained in a simple way.

Many of the women found the Finnish social security system rather complex and felt that they had not received enough information about it before, for instance in the earlier stage of integration. Discussions about this theme were held from a migrant woman's perspective.

The recently updated Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Refugees seemed to further complicate the issue.

Also women were interested in more detailed discussions about every day issues such as: health care, unemployment, housing benefits and education opportunities.

A lot of women did not have knowledge about the right to have own bank account or the right to have Finnish policies, such as the personalized integration plan made for all migrants.

It was acknowledged that many of the sexuality-related health matters are particularly pertinent to migrant women in culturally new contexts where practices may differ drastically from those that were used in their countries of origin.

In the conversation about the specific sexual and reproductive rights the participants were asked to choose the most crucial. The right to have information and education was by far the most cited one, followed by the right to choose whether to have children.

Nearly all of the women who participated in the training meetings had been exposed to violence, with the perpetrator most often being the woman's husband or boyfriend. Many of them shared their experiences openly, telling others about how their partners had abused them physically. In addition to physical violence, economical and emotional violence seemed to be the most common forms of violence.

Rape within the relationship was discussed. Some women did not consider it as a crime due to differing cultural expectations inherited from their countries of origin.

The criminal process under the Finnish jurisdiction was explained by the session leader, step by step from reporting the abuse onward. Most of the women had children and were therefore particularly interested in child's position in the context of domestic violence. Restraining orders, separation and divorce processes were explained in detail.

In general, however, the women felt that there is not enough information available in different languages on the different support mechanisms in place for victims of domestic violence. The cultural stigma attached to addressing violence within a relationship seemed as a further hindrance in making women seek help through therapeutic or legal means.

## 12.3. Self-Help Groups

### Time and Location

The training meetings took place between September and October 2012. The meetings were held in Helsinki, Finland, at the Multicultural Women's House and run by MONIKA. The researchers from Aleksanteri Institute were involved into the process of organizing and realizing new self-help groups. As per the project guidance, the venue is a safe and friendly environment in which the women felt comfortable discussing the topics.

### Educational Material

Educational material was written by MONIKA's professionals. It was in the Finnish language and the length was of 5 pages. The attachment in this educational material is used from the workstream 3 (methods and strategies of peer support) and is in the English language. The amount of the slides used in this attachments, is 35 and printed in 6 pages. The educational material is a short guide for the new self-help groups' leaders. The idea of this material is to give some guidelines for those who participated in *SPEAK OUT!* project and for those who are interested in organizing and leading self-help groups.

The first topic tells the reader about *SPEAK OUT!* project and its purpose. After that there is a topic that answers the question what is the group and what is the purpose of it. Then there are some guidelines how to plan the self-help group and what to take into consideration in the beginning. The guide gives some ideas about the topics of the group conversations. In the end on the guide the reader can find a list of important things to remember about while working with a self-help group, for instance, fiduciary duty. There is also an attachment file that gives more concrete information if needed.

### Meetings with the New Group Leaders

It was quite a challenge to organize the first meeting with the new support leaders after the workstream 3 was over. It took some time to arrange a suitable time and place for everyone. It looked like most of the project participants were not interested or enthusiastic in organizing their new support groups and sharing the knowledge they had received during the project. However, after the numerous

correspondences and phone calls, two meetings were held on September 13<sup>th</sup> 2012 at MONIKA's Resource Centre: first one at 2.00 – 3.00 o'clock pm and the second one at 3.30-4.30 o'clock pm.

The first meeting was between 2.00 – 3.00 o'clock pm in a very quiet and comfortable meeting room with some coffee/tea and cookies. Aino Saarinen from Aleksanteri Institute and two Russian speaking participants of the project were present. The purpose of the meeting and the idea of the next workstrem 4 of the project were told in the beginning. As a result of the discussion one of the Russian speaking participant informed, that it is not possible for her to organize her own support group, because of her working hours. Despite this decision, another Russian speaking woman was excited to continue working within the project. She agreed to organize her first self-help group with the support of MONIKA's staff members. She had some ideas about the theme of the new group meeting, but she wanted to go through the day's agenda before the meeting to be more confident about herself.

The second meeting was between 3.30 – 4.30 o'clock pm. Two English speaking women took part at the meeting: one was originally from Kenia and the other from Kongo. Both women moved to Finland 1-2 years ago and both of them are still in the integration process. They would like to organize self-help groups someday, because they understand the meaning and importance of it. It was agreed to check the possibility of having one support group on the weekend and another one later after working hours. These were the only options they could offer. The group meeting date was open, because MONIKA's staff needed to get permission for working after 5pm. or on weekend. As a result of the conversation with MONIKA's executive director the permission was granted.

Unfortunately, neither of the support groups ever took place even though there were no longer bureaucratic issues. The main reason to that was both of the new group leaders' life situation: beginning of the integration process, new school, work, children, difficulties in personal life (divorce, court cases... ) During that period of time they simply did not have any source of energy for doing something else. They were not emotionally ready to lead a group, because they needed that kind of support themselves.

The educational material was given to all potential group leaders, even though some of them were not ready to have their support groups within the *SPEAK OUT!* project time.

### **Russian Speaking Self-Help Group**

There were two new self-help groups organized during the project. The first self-help group meeting took place on September 27<sup>th</sup> 2012. The meetings were held in Helsinki, Finland, at the Multicultural Women's House. The meeting room had a safe and friendly environment in which the women felt comfortable dis-

cussing the topics. The participants of the new self-help group received by e-mails information about: the subject of the meeting, time and place in advance. According to a new group leader twelve women signed up to the meeting, but only seven could make it.

MONIKA's staff took care of the participants list, timetable and meal. The meeting began at 10.00 o'clock in the morning with a nice cup of tea or coffee. The common language of the self-help group was Russian.

As it came out, the participants' average time of living in Finland was about five years and they were not in the beginning of the integration process. The topic of the meeting was: Russian speaking immigrant in Finland. Women knew a lot about Finnish society and wanted to share their experience with each other. Chemistry between the women was good from the very beginning and every woman was very active.

In the beginning of the meeting the new leader introduced herself and told what was the agenda of the day. Also the participants of the group said their names, country of origin, what the reason was and when they moved to Finland. The participants were open-minded and interested in each other's stories.

The first theme of the self-help meeting was: moving to Finland. How did it affect on your life? Women had shared their experiences. Most of them had mentioned the difficulties with learning Finnish language, getting a job. They felt that the social network within Russian speaking immigrants was missing. Some of the participants pointed out that it would be nice to have more contacts with other Russian speaking migrant woman so that they could support each other, share information, to get to know more about Finnish society and culture. The communication in their mother tongue would have been very important.

The self-help group had a need in communication and opportunity of meeting again. So, women pointed out some very important topics for the future meetings such as:

- permanent living residence permit: how to get it, law changes
- divorce: how to apply for it, how much does it cost, how long does the process last
- restraining order: what is it, how does it work, how to apply for it and how to prove that there is a real danger in question
- what to do if a loved one needs a psychiatric help: where to get it, how does it work in Finland
- job interview: what do we need to know before going to the interview, how to write cv (Curriculum Vitae) and cover letter, from where to look for a job.

The group had a light lunch at 11.30 o'clock and after that continued discussion about further meetings. They were thinking what kind of options they had. For instance by registering an NGO (non-governmental and non-profit organization) the group could continue meetings plus some other activities like work-

ing with the families. The idea was good, except that none of the women was experienced in working in NGO or was not familiar with the project work. They needed more information and support for that. The second option was to join some project that would answer their needs. It would be possible to do in the Multicultural Women's House, at MONIKA.

By the end of the meeting Russian speaking self-help group chose a contact person and who would represent the group's goals and ideas. The group asked if it was possible to get more information about further activities from more experience organization. With some support of MONIKA's personnel the group had an appointment with Finnish Association of Russian speaking Organizations – FARO. All the participants of the group exchanged their contact information. They agreed to keep in touch by e-mail, to write down more concrete aims and possible types of activities they are interested in working with. The meeting ended at 13.00 o'clock. Women left the meeting room with the hope for the future activities and something they had needed for a long time.

In conclusion, the new self-help group leader enjoyed working with the group. She had no fear of doing something wrong and she felt more confident in being a group leader. The satisfaction of doing something important and useful for the others gave her more power to believe in herself. After all, she was full of ideas and energy to continue doing it.

### **Russian speaking self-help group's activities. Meeting with Finnish Association of Russian speaking Organization – FARO**

Russian speaking group of active woman chose a contact person for the meeting with FARO. The meeting was held in the office of Finnish Association of Russian speaking Organizations – FARO on October 15<sup>th</sup> 2012 between 3.30–4.30 o'clock pm. FARO's executive director and a project manager took part in a meeting. Also a project manager from MONIKA as a support person of the *SPEAK OUT!* project was present.

The topics of the conversation were sent by email in advance to MONIKA and FARO. The agenda of the meeting was as following:

- self-help groups with psychological support for the Russian speaking people who are at risk of or have suffered from any form of violence
- self-help groups with psychological support for the Russian speaking people who are at risk of or have suffered from any stress during the integration process in Finland
- group meetings to plan joint activities within the program of overcoming psychological crises.

The meeting was held in a quiet and friendly atmosphere. The representatives from FARO answered the questions in a very understandable way, gave some options and explained the differences between working as an NGO and being in

a group of active women under some organization. The representative of the Russian – speaking group had a lot of administrative questions, mainly because the NGO was a new and not very known form of working.

The meeting went past 4.30 pm. The group leader informed that it was a very productive meeting and that she has got enough information from FARO to think about. At the same time she asked to have a meeting with director of Multicultural Women’s Association – MONIKA to talk about continuation of working as a support group within the association or as an independent NGO. MONIKA agreed to support this group in any way they can.

### **Self-Help Group as Belly Dancing Activity**

Belly dance or “oriental dance” is for women of all ages, types, shapes and sizes. It is one of the few exercise forms that seems to encompass all dimensions of health and wellbeing. The regular practice of this fragrant art provides significant improvements in Cardio fitness and flexibility. Belly dance also provides artistic expression, cultural information, a social outlet and for some even, a spiritual connection. Belly dance is one of the best ways to relieve stress and depression. Dance is healing, not just for the physical self, but also for the personal dimensions of mind and soul.

The dancing classes were held in Helsinki, Finland, at the Multicultural Women’s House and run by the new self-help group leader. The size of the group was around 4 – 12 women per class. Belly dance classes started from the August 2012 till present time. The classes were once a week and all one and a half hours long. They consisted of technique, various modern and ethnic forms of Middle Eastern dance and Bollywood. There was a really warm, inclusive, non-judgmental and friendly atmosphere in the classes. Women learn belly dancing skills in an encouraging and friendly environment.

In order to get more information about this kind of form of self-help group the leader was interviewed by the staff of MONIKA. For instance she was asked about, how does belly dance sooth and uplift the mind, how does it effect on a women’s physical and mental health?

Belly dance is meditative and requires the mind to engage with the body, this gives the dancer a break from thoughts and worries that can sometimes torment us. This is similar to the effects of yoga or Tai Chi. In this state the spirit can flow through the body. Belly dance, can keep both your mind and body active. The exercise women receive in class improves circulation and helps prevent oxygen starvation to the brain. Additionally, remembering complex steps stimulates the working memory.

There’s another good reason why belly dance benefits the brain – an improved social life. Spending time with good friends can stimulate the mind and protect against mental decline. Being part of a group, team or community is one of the keys to a happy life, bringing emotional support and a sense of purpose.



Middle Eastern dance involves women interacting as a group, sharing and matching the roles of audience and entertainer.

According to the group leader belly dancing improves body language. The body is frequently the vehicle that stores emotional pain. If Middle Eastern dance is taught with this in mind and combined with psychological and feminist concepts, powerful, positive, postural changes can be the result. The effect of this is that it promotes positive feedback from others. People respond to confident, assertive body language by non-verbally communicating the affirmation that that person is powerful and worthy of respect. This feedback can only enhance self-esteem.

Dance shows and performances. Performance is fun, builds team spirit, forges friendships and boosts self-esteem. Also sewing and decorating costumes by themselves has therapeutic effect. The aim for the nearest future was to have some dance shows and performances for the bigger audience. Another goal was to continue having a dancing class at least twice a week.

#### **Results of the Workstream 4**

- New support groups
- Implementation 6/2012 – 10/2012
- Meetings and discussions with the new group leaders
- Guide for the new support group leaders, written by MONIKA
- Russian-speaking support group
- Implementation 09.27.2012
- Participants 8
- Project result – registration of a new NGO in 2013
- Estonian support group leader
- Implementation 8/2012 – continues
- Belly dancing courses for the migrant women at MONIKA
- Participants 6-10 women, once a week and 1,5 h /1 time

#### **Difficulties Faced During the Workstream 4**

In spite of all preparation was done in order to realize two English speaking self-help groups main challenges were:

- The new group leaders' unstable life situation
- Beginning of the integration process
- Living in Finland was less than 5 years
- Difficulties and unfinished projects in personal life (divorce, court cases... )
- Women were not ready to lead a group emotionally, because they needed support themselves.

However, the interest shown by English speaking women in realizing their skills was true. In the nearest future they wished to act as a support person assisting those in need. They also had plans of organizing self-help groups, using hand-work as a psychological instrument. It is important to mention, that some of English speaking women work in the health care system. This gives a great opportunity for them to use a group leader's or support person's skills specially working with the multicultural patients. These knowledge and skills can be also used within their own community.

## **Reasons of Two Succeed Self-Help Groups**

It is a great pleasure to present the great result of the project work of MONIKA in cooperation with Aleksanteri Institute focusing on researches on Russia and Eastern Europe. The implementation of two different self-help groups was a full success. There were two types of groups: Russian speaking self-help group and a self-help group in form of a belly dancing activity.

Russian speaking leader with a support group of very active women decided to register their own NGO in 2013. They already started preparation of the necessary documentation in the end of 2012. MONIKA will be guiding them during the whole process from registration till the independent work as an NGO. The most important key to this success was a human factor, meaning that:

- Women had more or less stable life situation
- Crises were already left behind
- The integration process was completed
- Living in Finland was over 5 years
- Women's emotional state of mind required some action like sharing their experience with those who are in need or in a similar life situation
- Women had enough time and wish to be a self-help group leader
- Need to share their experiences with others, need to support and be useful

Both group leaders were victims of human trafficking. They had to go through a long-term criminal process. At the same time they were struggling about their living permits, right to work, place to live and their own safety. They had to go through very emotionally difficult times. These women were strong enough to ask for help and support from MONIKA. And after the crises were left behind, these women had enough power and human resources to join this project in order to learn how to be useful for other women who are still in crises. The feeling to help others, share their experiences and to show that there is life without violence was too strong.

## 12.4. Self-Assessed Evaluation on the Training Activities and Results

The partners of the *SPEAK OUT!* project agreed that the approach to gender-based violence should be intercultural, considering the project aim of creating a gender-sensitive language on VAW, that it should be also culturally appropriate and it should reflect VAW experiences, interpretations and related needs of women from different origins, now living in participants' countries. The participants in Finland were from around 13 different countries. This fact brings very valuable information to the project.

The aim of the project was to create a transcultural training toolkit on VAW that is gender as well as cultural sensitive and pays attention to women's rights, women's differences and their empowerment. This toolkit would have to provide migrant, refugee and ethnic minority women with professional training skills to act as trainers on VAW in the future. In this way, these women will become a bridge between migrant networks and local care and health services, NGOs, etc. in the territory where they live. As a result of the project work MONIKA has two self-help groups working independently.

In the beginning, it was suggested to involve at least two different cultural-linguistic groups. Italian partner for instance decided to involve mainly migrant and refugee women from various nationalities (and/or from different cultural-linguistic groups), who have been living in Padua or its surroundings for at least five years.

SURT (Spain) decided to involve migrant women living in the city of Barcelona or its province, of non EU- origin or from Eastern Europe, and who have been living in Spain for at least 10 years. Refugee and ethnic minority women were not targeted.

The University of Helsinki in cooperation with Multicultural Women's Association – MONIKA involved Russian speaking women and also women from other nationalities who are living in Finland permanently. There was no time limitation of living in Finland. Women from 13 different nationalities took part into the project in Helsinki. The working languages in the group discussions and training meetings were Finnish-English. The languages in the self-help groups were English, Russian and Finnish.

It is important to mention, that cooperation between MONIKA and Aleksanteri Institute went very smoothly. The work was beneficial, supportive and very productive for the both partners. Academic point of view of the researches from the Aleksanteri Institute and practical experience of MONIKA was a combination when both partners supported each other in a very positive way.

There was also an idea to involve Roma women into project activities in Finland, but unfortunately it did not succeed. This target group was not easy to reach. In addition to that the target group did not show any interest in this project. However, Roma women groups succeeded in the research part of the proj-

ect. The result of these group works is valuable information and important conclusions for the analogous projects in the future.

The partners of the project agreed that women participating at training and self-help activities (workstream 3 and 4) are the same during all meetings. Finland did not make any exception.

Workstreams 1 and 2 was useful in sense of evaluating women's interest, availability and accessibility to participate at workstreams 3 and 4.

### **Challenges During the Project:**

The project work proceeded according to the work plan and timetable. Discussion meetings (workstream 2) were arranged in November 2011, training meetings (workstream 3) were arranged between May and August 2012, self-help group establishment and facilitation (workstream 4) was arranged in October 2012. However, long intervals between the workstreams, the length of the project (2011 – 2012) affected on the participants interest. Spring and autumn time also brought challenges into the project. In Finland it is a time for applying for a school, courses, vacations, etc. Some women could not participate in the project during the day time, because of a new job, study, crisis in personal life, childcare issues, etc.

There have been some difficulties in finding migrant women who could commit to the project because of the structure of the target group, the length of the discussion meetings (6 hours/day) and the language barrier.

Change of the personnel also affected on a schedule. There were three different coordinators during this project: Ida Jarnila was working in the project in 2011, later between February and August 2012 it was Emmi Antinoja and at the end of August 2012 Jekaterina Tanttu continued coordinating the project.

Misunderstandings – some of the participants misunderstood the goal of the project.

Lack of communication caused by weak Finnish or English language skills.

Participants' life situation was not in a good phase in order to be a group leader– some women were still in crisis or in the beginning of the integration process.

Some of the subjects of the training meetings were not easy to understand or participants did not show any interest.

The timetable for realizing new self-help groups was not suitable for the most of the women – some of them got working places, entered the University, childcare issues, etc.

One of the challenges was to find a 'hook' or motivating factor that will encourage the target group to be on side. The motivation was slowing down in the end of the workstream 3. Perhaps couple of last topics of the training meetings was not easy to understand or the life situation was so difficult, that it was not possible to take part into the project during the daytime.

Challenge to make sure that information given during the meetings was clear and understood.

The fact, that some of women moved to Finland recently and some of them still needed personal support in everyday life also affected on the activity of the project work.

Working in two and more languages at the same time slowed down the process and took too much time

Being a leader of a self – help group was something that some of the women felt they had enough personal resources to make it, even with the support of MONIKA.

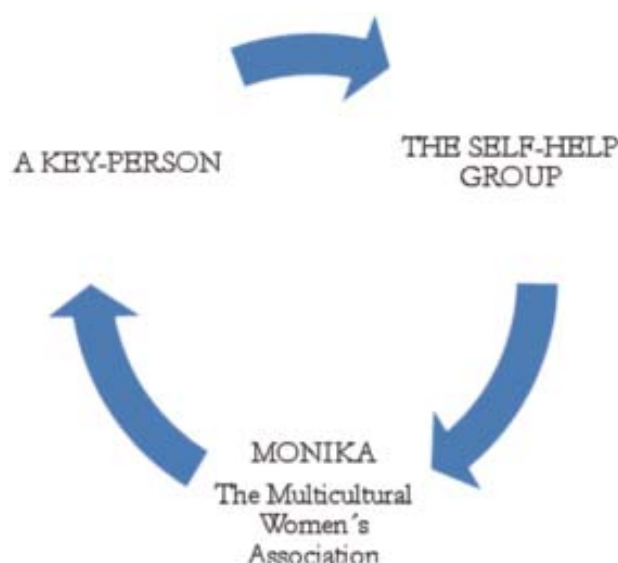
It was important to identify the target group’s nature in order to understand its needs, general knowledge about Finnish society even personal resources in the beginning of the project work. There was no previous interview or preliminary research with the potential participants of the project in order to get information about their life situation. Unfortunately, this was taking into account when the project was already in progress.

Luckily, MONIKA could arrange a childcare during the whole project time. It was a great help for the women, but at the same time this service caused additional expenses for MONIKA.

During the *SPEAK OUT!* project MONIKA had a real opportunity to test and realize a new approach in working with the migrant women after the crises. This experience could be implemented as a part of MONIKA’s activities in the future.

MONIKA as a “Pilot” of this European project has received very valuable information and experience. The Association has its vision about the possible pathway for NGO mentors for empowering migrant women against gender violence.

## Requirements for the new self-help groups



## **Who is a key-person?**

Interested in work as a volunteer  
Willing to work as a volunteer  
Individual life is not on crises  
Trained as a new self-help group leader

## **The group of people**

In life crises  
Need support  
Commit to the regular meetings  
Have common issues  
Wish to share with others

## **MONIKA – The Multicultural Women’s Association**

Able to assist  
Able to support  
Able to coordinate  
Provides financial support  
According to this project’s experience, the successful work experience and cooperation is obtained when there is a trained person willing to do a volunteer’s work, a group of people interested in self-help groups and a professional support from the NGO. It is important that the NGO has a stable financial support in order to assist and support the activity of the self-help group. All these conditions must be present.

## **SUMMARY. The Finnish Legislative Framework**

### **The Finnish Constitution**

A major constitutional reform (969/1995) (in force 1995) was done in mid 1990s in conjunction with the overall reform of the fundamental rights. The following reform was made in end 1990s (731/1999 (2000) – latest one 1112/2011). In general, the constitution is in congruence with the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights (2000/C 364/01) (Finland joined the EU in 1995). It is divided into 13 chapters – in view of VAW, the most important is the chapter 2 on basic rights and liberties. The section 6 on equality states that “Everyone is equal before the law” and is followed by the ban of discrimination: “No one shall, without an acceptable reason, be treated differently from other person on the ground of sex, age, origin, language, religion, conviction, opinion, health, disability or other reasons that concerns his or her person.” The chapter emphasises the rights to life, personal liberty and integrity and security, and the respect regarding children. (Note: the Law on the Ombudsman for Children in Finland 1221/2004 was enacted in mid 2000s.) Of importance is also the right to profess and practice religion (including “other” religions) and express one’s conviction. Furthermore,

everyone's rights to education, one's language and culture, and social security right, and, to work and commercial activity should also be guaranteed. In more detail, in addition to the national languages, Finnish and Swedish, the Sami and the Roma minorities are mentioned but only the Sami have the right to use their language before the law and the authorities. The status of the Roma language is thus not especially privileged as compared to the languages of "other groups": they have (only) the right to "maintain and develop" their language. As to social security there is a statement on "the means necessary for a life of dignity" and "indispensable subsistence and care"; right to adequate health and medical services and housing are also included. Finland, like the other "Nordics" is known for work ethos; the statements on the "right to work" and the "protection of labour force" are therefore strong normative principles.

All these rights are relevant in view of migrant and minority women's economic independence and, at need, support from the universalist welfare state – known for its "woman-friendliness": the two-breadwinner family model and, alternatively, special measures for wellbeing of single providers in order to promote combining work and family. Families come up shortly. Worth a note is in this respect the law on residence and domicile (below).

People are divided into "citizens" and "legal residents"; from another view, there are privileged majority-minority language groups (Finnish- and Swedish-speaking (5%), Sami (as indigenous people) and national minority groups (Roma) and "other groups" (e.g. various incomers). Due to the residence-based welfare regime (below), all legal residents are entitled to a large set of welfare rights – note that due to the subsidiarity principle Finland (and the other Nordic EU members) has been able to preserve the model (built from the 1950s on). As to welfare rights, it is more inclusive than other models in the EU Europe.

There is no mention on gender violence but as VAW is in international frameworks (UN, EU, CoE) part of human rights it is under on public "observance". Commitment to international treaties (emphasised in the last chapter) obliges Finland to implement anti-VAW legislations and policies. As the rule of law, along with democracy, is one of the leading principles, administration of justice and supervision of legality are worth of special attention.

### **Special Legislation and Policies**

The special legislation should be in congruence with the constitutional rights and liberties so that not to forget the authorities' obligations.

### **Discrimination: Act on Equality between Women and Men**

The equality act (609/1986 (1987) – latest one 488/2011) was enacted in mid 1980s when welfare and gender policies were developed in the spirit of the Nordic model which stressed the universalist welfare rights and gender equality; gender equality was understood mainly as the right to combine work and family.

The act states the prohibition of discrimination, both direct and indirect, and concentrates thereafter on equality of opportunities in work life; so called positive discrimination is encouraged through the pro-active equality plans. Note: since mid-2000s (235/2005), not only public authorities and individual employers but also the “interest organisations” have been collectively representing the employers and employees (trade unions) are held responsible. In the 2005’s reform, interestingly, sections of “sexual harassment” in general and “harassment on the basis of gender” in work life were added. The term “unwanted” gives the priority of the interpretation to the victim – especially as the principle of the “reverse burden” is confirmed as well (from 1986 on). Compensations for the victims have been updated regularly. The supervision belongs to the equality ombudsman and the equality board.

### **Non-Discrimination Act**

The act on non-discrimination (211/2004 (2004), latest one 84/2009) draws directly from the corresponding EU Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC); of course it also implements the constitutional rights and liberties. The act promotes non-discrimination in work life, in education, social and health services and benefits, and in housing. Like the equality act, it obliges the authorities, the employers and the interest organisations to implement pro-active measures; the so-called positive discrimination is encouraged through the non-discrimination plans. In detail, the act forbids discrimination on the grounds of age, ethnic origin, nationality, language, religion, conviction and sexual orientation – and gender by referring to the equality act. It confirms the principle of reverse burden. The act is supervised by the minority ombudsman (660/2001) and the non-discrimination board protecting “new” and “old” minorities; the ombudsman is also the anti-trafficking rapporteur.

### **Legislation on Homosexuality**

Criminalisation of homosexuality (from 1894) was removed from the criminal code in 1971 but from the list of illnesses only in 1981. The age of consent was enacted the same as in heterosexual relations as late as in 1998 (563/1998). In 2001, the law on the registered relationships (950/2001) was effective but marriage is even today an heterosexuals’ institution, and the church does not marry same-sex couples. The adoption rights are still on the reform agenda.

### **Legislation on Sexual Crimes**

A major reform of the penal code was carried out still under the title “indecent assault” in mid 1990s (316/1994); in 1998 (563/1998) the title became “sexual crimes”. The code makes a difference between rape and sexual act; they are divided into three categories (aggravated, “normal”, forced); the abuse of children (till 17 years) is defined similarly. As to the ban of pimping, the regulations are special: the sex worker is a “victim” – that is, “selling of sex” is not criminalized;



buying sex is since 2006 (743/2006) in cases when the sex worker is trafficked or under-aged. (The Finnish code does not go as “far” as the codes in Sweden and Norway where buying sex is in all cases criminalised) Rape in marriage too is criminalized in 1994.

### **Marriage Act**

The major reform (of 234/1929) took place in late 1980s (411/1987) (1987) – the latest one 23/2012). The act defines the marriage as the relationship between a woman and a man; the family is comprised of two generations (only): the parents and their descending children. This is different as compared to the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights but line with the ideal of the two-breadwinner family: the spouses are both liable for maintenance of the family and, jointly, for children. Both have the right to enter paid work. The right to officiate has been granted the Lutheran and Orthodox churches and, in addition, to some twenty religious communities, amongst them the Catholic churches and four Islam communities. In early 2000s (1226/2001), a large chapter on international marriages was added. – Note: bigamy (polygamy) is not allowed or, in other words, being married is a “lawful excuse” to another legal marriage (cohabitation, partnership with certain social rights). As to the age of the spouses, the statues are the same as for citizens. The ban of marrying a close relative does not extend (anymore) to (first) cousins.

### **Migrants Including Returnees and Refugees: Aliens Act**

The major reform of the aliens act is from mid 2000s (301/2004) (2004) – the latest one 449/2012). The act had however already been reformed in the mid-1990s (511/1996) for the good of people with Finnish origin in the former Soviet Union. The “returnees” were allowed access on the same grounds as people from the other Nordics (see the Nordic passport union from mid-1950s) – that is, with the right to settle down without means of their own and pre-confirmed housing. Later the criteria have been tightened and in 2015 this gate will close. The major reform in the mid-2000s was in line with the corresponding EU directive – except that there is a collision with the Nordic residence-based welfare model and the EU principles (see the Charter of Fundamental Rights). Namely, the Finnish law guarantees to incomers access to similar welfare rights with citizens on a (at least) one-year permit. The refugees are on public responsibility but only half of applicants get the status of a refugee or humanitarian migrant – and apply then for a local domicile (below). In 2006 (619/2006) trafficking of people became included; the victims get special protection and a right to settle down in line with the EU principles. The EU borders are well guarded from “third country nationals” outside the EU/EEA area. “Free movement” has been however extended to people inside the EU because in 2007 (358/2007, a new reform opened access to “third country citizens” with a permanent EU stay permit (EP). Migrants for marriage and family reunion (regarding refugees) form a

large category, work migrants minor. The conditions for access for the refugee re-union especially have been tightened in the last years, during the “immigration as contested” phase

As to VAW, the stay permit is guaranteed even in case of break-up for EU citizens and EP persons in case domestic violence has happened. As to other categories, e.g. partners of Finnish citizens, the regulations are unclear – or: the victim must have “close ties” to Finland (paid work, a child born here, integrated here) is not protected properly.

### **Integration Act**

The Act on the Reception Centres of Asylum Seekers (1465/1991) was enacted due to minor sporadic migration (e.g. by UN quota refugees) before the major waves of immigration. The Integration Act was enacted in end-1990s by referring to increasing refugee migration and to “fulfilling humanitarian obligations”; clearly the act was in line with the global commitments and the residence-based Nordic welfare model embedded in the constitution on fundamental rights. The act aim at guaranteeing basic welfare (including housing) and opportunities for integration (language courses, education, work training) throughout the application process; during the three-year integration phase the responsibility moves to the local level, the community of domicile (below). In 2009, an experiment was started by expanding the “target” group to all migrants – divided into three categories: a) children and young people, b) those with good prospects in regard to settling down (i.e. good work qualifications), and c) those in need of special support and an extra year (e.g. refugee mothers with children). These years, debates on refugees’ “unwillingness” to integrate, living permanently on welfare, and representing “alien” gender cultures have been intensified. As to their family re-union, some minor rights and benefits have been deprived or the level has been lowered. – Note: irrespective of the “freedom of movement” directive the EU-Roma are treated as “tourists”.

### **Welfare Legislation**

#### **Act on the Application of Residence-based Social Security; Act on Social Assistance**

The act (1527/1993) is a kind of an “umbrella” law derived from the constitution. It is in line with the Nordic welfare model: the rights of legal residents (with at least one-year permit) are the same as citizens’. Having the (local) domicile (along with it, the social insurance number) is the key to settling down. The special legislations (Act on Social Assistance 1412-1997 – latest one 385/2011) regarding social and health, educational and work rights (including unemployment benefits) aim at guaranteeing the minimum for “dignified living”. All residents ought to be treated along universalist and individualist principles; however, women who are not gainfully integrated to work life have been deprived from

some social benefits if the husband's income exceeds the minimum level "enough" for "dignified living" of a family; in this respect the model does guarantee women's economic independence (as women earn less, men seldom lose the benefit). A reform of this section, harmful for many refugee women without a job themselves, is underway. – Note: the Act on Residence and Domicile (483/1994 – latest one 1215/2005) reformed in conjunction with the constitution and regarding fundamental rights links the migrant and the local-level welfare rights together.

### **Anti-VAW Legislation and Policies**

There is no specific legislation regarding VAW but it is "scattered" within numerous statutes and enactments. The constitution is of course the starting point and along with new international (UN, EU, CoE) norms and policies reforms have been made since the mid-1990s: marriage act, aliens act, and, moreover, the penal code (see above). On the other hand, at the policy level specific plans have been carried out nationally, regionally and locally, to build up extensive multi sectorial networks and collaboration (see Introduction). Furthermore, follow-ups and evaluations of the implementation of legal norms and policies have been carried out but a joint effort to include migrants, refugee and minority women is missing; national minority women (Roma, Sami) have been close to being totally excluded. Sporadic measures to fight prostitution in marriages (Thai especially) and the exposition to honour violence have been passed in 2000.

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### 13.1. Group Discussions and Training Meetings

#### Group Discussions

- 11.12.2011** In Purmerend: Immigration law; Law against violence against women
- 12.06.2011** In Wageningen: Creative activities to face gender violence
- 12.16.2011** In Amsterdam: Story-telling to face gender violence
- 01.10.2012** In Den Hague: Gender violence in different cultures; How to face violence against women and children

TIYE International organized four group discussions meetings in 4 different places in the Netherlands. These places were:

1. In Purmerend (12<sup>th</sup> November 2011) with 11 women of different culture and Middle educated. These women were interested in the immigration law, and the law against violence against women.
2. In Wageningen (6<sup>th</sup> December 2011) there were 14 women from different ethnic groups and high educated. Some of them were singers, a designer, painter, manager etc. This was a more creative group. So after the discussion they could make a poem or painting that explain their situation.
3. In Amsterdam (16<sup>th</sup> December 2011) there were 15 (low class) farmer women from Surinamese Indian background. After the different questions these women were more interested in story telling about their position and how they dealt with it (or did not know how to). This was a big issue for these women.
4. In Den Hague (10<sup>th</sup> January 2012) we had 15 women of different background and cultures. Questions were asked about gender roles in their culture and how violence against women and children manifested in the family and how they were dealing with it.

Different forms of violence were explained; after that a discussion started on questions as:

- What is your cultural background. How do you define your ethnic group?
- What kind of expectations does one have in gender roles of that culture?
- How did that influences your identity?

- How does your ethnic group communicate with other groups?
- What is your personal story?
- In what context are women isolated, integrated or assimilated?
- Do you know what the law says about violence against women in the Netherlands and Europe. and about immigration?

## Training Meetings

Date	Contents
05.19.2012	Psychosocial support methodologies and techniques for women who are at risk of or suffer from any form of violence ( <i>Ann Mannen</i> , Dean Higher Professional School for Business Management)
06.06.2012	Migrant women's right and specific legislation at National, European and International level ( <i>Thera van Osch</i> , Director EU Gender Helpdesk in Brussels); Discussion about the EU Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence
06.07.2012	Violence against women migrant workers ( <i>Maisab Burleson</i> , Head of Human Recourse Management); Discussion on Aggression and Violence at the workplace
06.15.2012	Peer Support methodologies and strategies to create a self-help group for women who are at risk of or have suffered from any form of violence ( <i>Maisab Burleson</i> , Head of Human Recourse Management Problem solving cases)
06.22.2012	Violence against (BMR) women and related help services in the local context ( <i>Audrey Vreugd</i> , Senior policy worker); The report code; Case and discussion
06.29.2012	Sexual and reproductive rights; Definition of the topic terms and definition of cultural relativism and female sexuality; The rights of women under international and domestic Dutch law
08.31.2012	Sexual abuse, sexual intimidation and reproductive rights among BMR women in the Netherlands ( <i>Keisha Henry</i> , criminal and international law expert); View and discussion of the film "Burden of Silence-Al Jazeera-Witness"
09.07.2012	Information about violence during courtship; View and discussion of the film "Lover boys-Al Jazeera-Witness"; Violent behavior via internet and mobile smart phones
10.12.2012	( <i>Jean Biekman</i> , Director of Jabrijo): Personal story-telling; Discussion of several issues: cultural difference, shame, taboos, trust; Colour of the Support Circle

**Training 1.** *Peer-support methodologies and strategies to create a self-help group for women who are at risk of or have suffered from any form of violence.*

**Training 2.** *Psychosocial support methodologies and techniques for women who are at risk of or suffer from any form of violence.*

The training sessions aims at informing and enabling migrant, refugee and ethnic minority women who are at risk or are suffering from various forms of violence to reflect upon the existing opportunities to get access to legal, social, health and job counseling as well as women's anti-violence related services and support groups. Moreover, they will be trained in peer-support methodologies and techniques. Subsequently, they will contribute to setting up and supporting the networking among migrant women as well as between the latter and local services. The project aims to give BMR women in all their diversity a voice and to develop their abilities and skills to improve their self-awareness on the different dimensions of violence against women in everyday life. The following themes were central:

1. Peer-support methodologies and strategies to create a self-help group for women who are at risk of or have suffered from any form of violence;
2. Psychosocial support methodologies and techniques for women who are at risk of or suffer from any form of violence.

## **Introduction**

Violence permeates all areas of daily life and affects everyone to a greater or lesser extent, in overt or hidden form. In particular, in the first session the concept of empowerment is central. By empowering families and especially strengthen the dimensions of empowerment we handle data and alternatives that can serve as prevention. Both sessions were also some deeper underlying principles, namely that of the unity of humanity by working on unit-based relationships, equality of the sexes and the importance of justice (legal empowerment). These principles underpin a culture of safety and peace. Emphasis is also how the family culture determines the basic attitude toward disruption of peace in the house. Furthermore, how empowerment contributes to primary prevention of violence-free relationships was central to the first session.

After the introduction of the participants, ten participants had experience with Breakthrough training as trainer. These participants could quickly connect to the context of this workshop prevent violence in relationships through empowerment.

Five participants worked as a social worker.

We started with an explanation of the subject of the workshop violence in family relationships through the concept of power based on unity based rela-

tions. The theory about power, pamper and unit-based relationships we have explained with the help of a scheme.

Following the introduction to the spiral of violence, a participant told the following story:

*She was the counsellor of a Philippine woman who was in a divorce procedure with her white Dutch husband. The house was after the divorce assigned to the Philippines' woman. Because the woman knew that her ex-partner would be very angry about that, she went with support of the counsellor several times to for help at the municipality to ask for another accommodation. She did not get another house, because she already had one. One day the doorbell rang. The children were playing, they opened the door and saw to her horror that her ex-husband was at the door. He walked to the kitchen, grabbed a knife and in front of the children repeatedly stabbed her until she died. Family then collected the children and the man came into the prison. Now, four years later he is out of prison and is free.*

This experience was an example of the spiral of violence. How can empowerment contribute to secondary prevention? If you look at the socialization of the counsellor and the client you learn from at early age to identify yourself and learn a lot how to care for people. Both women are from the Philippines. The position of the majority of these women in the Netherlands is as a migrant worker or they are married to a white Dutchman. The economic dimension of empowerment: having your own resources is a dilemma. They are often dependent on their partner or employer wherein this case they often work as an au pair.

The political empowerment that you have heard of, and also that you have a voice when it comes to your own autonomy and development can be just as economic empowerment a theme in counselling. The spiritual empowerment can play a role in the physical and psychological empowerment of women. The social empowerment becomes stronger because women often are members of a church or other place where they meet each other in different ways.

During the sessions, we have discussed the impact of empowerment on the secondary prevention of violence-free relationships. The focus of the sessions was awareness of factors that hinder the empowerment of your family or making it stronger.

Empowerment is not something that comes from the outside by anyone to us. It is a process of learning to use and exploit our inner strength and that of others. A power is the engine of social, economic and political changes. This inner strength can be fully developed through education and training, in a society where we accept the oneness of humanity. A society where we feel in our bones we are as a link in a chain.



## The Empowerment Process

Empowerment is a process that starts with yourself and the group to which you belong to, and then radiates to your environment. The empowerment process is similar to the effect of a stone thrown into the water, creating circles of waves.

If you start to change your life, then the circles begin around you to change. If you stand still to watch and see this change, you can get a better grip on the things around you.

Kofi Annan says the following about empowerment in the Millennium Conference “ Why terrorism? ” (15 November 2001):

*We, as ordinary people, have tremendous power to make the world more equitable. We are the cells and the sinews and the bone of the tightly integrated, coherent organism, which is the world, and all our actions have an effect far beyond ourselves. We have power as consumers, and if we choose to, we can use that power to create equitable working conditions for the producers of the goods we consume. We have tremendous power as citizens of a democratic society, and if we choose to use it, we can wield that power to elect leaders who recognise and are committed to transforming the fundamental imbalances that burden the world. We are only empowered to take these actions if we understand, if we can see ourselves as part of an organically connected world. So we change the world when we work to change ourselves, and the way we think.*

Empowerment contributes in making us feel worthy. People who feel worthy give hope. Hope, the force that helps us to continue searching for integrity. Hope is universal because hope is not tied to class, race, ethnicity, language or religion.

They feel connected with all people and experience a collective responsibility. They dare to dream. Each of us has our own dreams in which we believe. We have hope, for us, our dream is a reality. We are a source of inspiration, we have self-respect. They have a family or network on which they can fall back. If they do not have that, they will create them for themselves. They are people who have vision. By their vision you feel that they are aimed at a specific target.

They usually feel connected with others and with life, without them giving up something of their own uniqueness. They put themselves at the service of a greater whole, but do not take the colour of the whole. They feel as a part of a larger energy. One of these people was Eleanor Roosevelt.

## Why Empowering Families?

Families are part of society, like cells of an organism. The dynamics of society are reflected in the dynamics of its elements and so it's logical to assume that there is a link between social, structural and political violence within the family.

When women are denied equality and respect in the family, men and boys develop harmful attitudes and habits which they carry into political life and ulti-

mately into international relations. For this reason, to secure women's basic rights, also within the family, men at all levels of society need to play a more active role in preventing gender-based violence. Changes in both men's and women's behaviour are necessary conditions for achieving the harmonious partnership of man and woman. Men play a key role in bringing about gender equality since, in most societies, men exercise preponderant power in nearly every sphere of life. Women can be remoulded and revitalised through empowerment.

An empowered family provides its members with security, love, affection, shelter, comfort, stability, self-esteem, education, a sense of responsibility and fulfilment. It also provides for the material, physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs of its members. In empowered families there is recognition of individual capacities, rights and responsibilities. There is free and frank consultation in a safe and loving atmosphere of positive high regard for self and others.

*In an empowered family, children are reared to be conscious of the needs of the society around them and to be willing to behave altruistically within the limits of their capacities. This is likely to be one of the most effective long-term remedies for a whole range of social problems, including poverty and violence in the family. Essential to the empowerment of families is the full realisation of all human rights and of responsibilities and fundamental freedoms. UN conventions on human rights have strong legal dimensions, but should also be related to individual rights in the family.*

*Gender equality is of crucial importance for the empowerment of families. In a balanced well-functioning family the principles of equality of women and men are internalised. Well – functioning families do not develop without considerable support from society and the community.*

*A well-functioning family can become dysfunctional rapidly because of the fast changing processes in society. Migration and becoming a refugee or an asylum seeker has had a tremendous impact on families worldwide. People can lose their anchor points when they move from one country to another. People lose their roles outside the family. One can be a well-respected physician in one country and in another country a cleaner simply because one is a refugee or asylum seeker.*

*The fundamental solution lies ultimately in the common recognition of the oneness of humanity. This is a spiritual principle which implies more than a willingness to cooperate; it speaks of the longing of people everywhere for a world infused with such a spirit of community, fellowship and compassion, that human misery and degradation, violence and oppression will become unthinkable. The acceptance of the oneness of mankind will, in the end, prove the most powerful force to create violence-free families. Family members are interdependent. They are dependent to get attention, respect and recognition. Clashes in families can be normal if there is love, respect and justice. Out of the clashes of different opinions we can discover the truth. If we learn patterns of non-violence at home, they will influence our daily work and all aspects of life.*

(statement, Ann Mannen, Wenen, 2004)

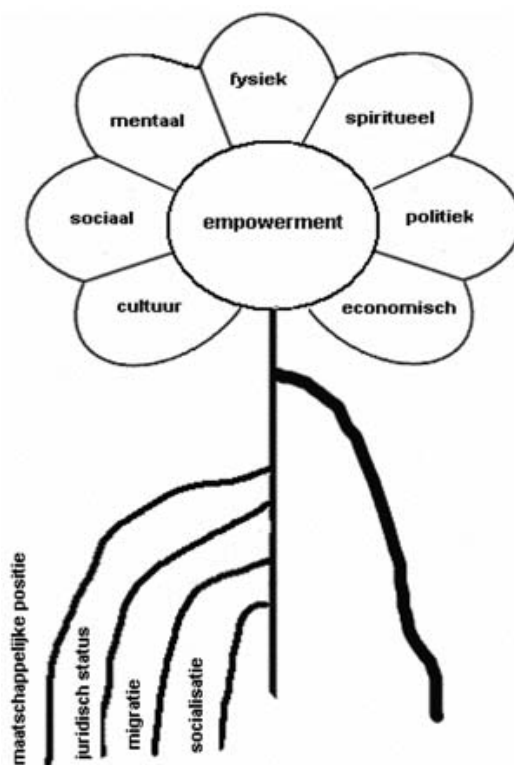
We have reflected on the various dimensions of empowerment: social; physical; mental; economic; political; cultural; spiritual.

### Political Empowerment and Non-violent Communication

Non-violent Communication helps to make contact, that your voice in all matters are heard and that you also hear others and feel (political empowerment). Give your talents optimal attention to life. Through your job you contribute to your economic empowerment. You have sufficient resources to do what you are on earth. The physical empowerment we strengthen through healthy diet and strengthen your vitality. Our psychological empowerment becomes stronger by being happy. The spiritual empowerment we can strengthen through prayers and meditation.

### Strengthening Social Empowerment

We strengthen our social empowerment through a circle of trust and to feel a system around you. We describe how we can work towards a culture of peace. The appointed virtues are: sincerity, warmth, forgiveness, contact, home, trust, attention, empathy, humility, patience, generosity, respect, flexibility, memory, loyalty, gratitude, service and joy.



### Socialisation of Your Empowerment

Legal empowerment is anchored in human rights. Eleanor Roosevelt is the “mother” of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. On 10<sup>th</sup> December 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in Paris. A declaration of thirty articles that should be as a guide that had to serve a global community, everyone on earth should enjoy the formulated rights and the atrocities of the Second World War should have been the past. Unfortunately, since the Second World War there have been more than 500 wars.

In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights there are 75 declarations and conventions on the rights of women and children.

The United Nations noted immediately after they had started in 1945 with their work that much remains to be done to combat discrimination based on sex. Already in the Charter of the United Nations (1946) states that men and women have equal rights (art (8)). Therefore, in 1945 a special UN committee was adjust-

ed to improve the position of women: the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) .

This committee meets annually and makes recommendations to the 3rd Committee of the General Assembly and is also responsible for the preparation and implementation of world conferences on women.

This UN world conferences on women, 1975 in Mexico to 1995 in Beijing, offered insight into the causes and extent of inequality between men and women. Besides the world conferences there are shadow conferences for NGOs and individual women. Women share their experiences there, ideas, visions and expertise. Women strengthen their networks and formulate strategies for action at local, national, regional and international levels. In Mexico, there were 1,500 women. In Copenhagen 5000 women in Nairobi 14.000 and 37.000 women in China.

When in 1945 the United Nations was founded only governments could join. Fortunately existed from the beginning of an awareness that the input of all individuals on this earth is of great importance to achieve the objectives of the United Nations.

In 1967 the UN realises that still not enough has been done and there will be a special declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. This Agreement is the most ratified by the Member States with the most reserved. Netherlands has ratified the Convention in 1991 without reservations. After ratification, countries must annually report to the CEDAW Committee on the national implementation of the Convention.

Violence against women is not explicitly mentioned in the UN Women's Convention. This has to do with the fact that treaty texts were mostly written by men and not completely tailored were on the life experience of women

In the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights explicitly states that the government should not interfere in matters which play indoors or are private. This treaty thus sometimes ignores the protection that families need from the government.

Slavery was not considered trafficking. Also inviolability of the person and inhuman act, nor rape, abuse and restriction of freedom, forced confinement of women in the home and various forms of emotional abuse.

Thus, many forms of violence and discrimination fell beyond the field of cases of international human rights mechanisms. In the 80s can be seen that the very violence against women is one of the worst forms of violation of women's human rights. Whether this violence occurs in the private sphere, in the community or in the name of the state.

Since 1991, we have in the Netherlands Equal Treatment Act which is an elaboration of Article 1 of the Constitution. Two years ago at the UN Women's Convention a major boost was given with the adoption of the Optional Protocol. Citizens can thus individually submit a complaint to the committee that monitors compliance with the UN Women's Convention. A legitimate complaint from a citizen can lead to offering a form of recovery by a Member State.

Only in the Forward Looking Strategies – the Final Document of the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985 – was recognized that women worldwide have common problems and that we need each other to solve our problems.

During the World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995) representatives from different countries and religions jointly formulated an important paragraph. A paragraph recognizing that differences in religion, culture, thoughts, values, norms can be enriching. If these differences are a violation of human rights, they will not be tolerated. Examples include female circumcision and inheritance in some cultures. In some countries, widows inherit nothing after the death of their partner

## Evaluation and Follow-Up Arrangements

We have applied the principles of non-violent psychology in the meetings. One challenge was not to judge and not to come with solutions. The meetings were informative for all participants.

Attention is that we advance the good starting position of all participants in card. These meetings were intended for workers because the theme of primary prevention and empowering the trainers of the Breakthrough Training.

Touching were the experiences, strategies and methodologies that these trainers of the Breakthrough training, with the group shared about the training they have given. To Tiye we ask to organise a meeting in the autumn with the trainers where their experiences, lessons and successes thanks to the Breakthrough Training are central. The concept of the support groups is transferable.

## To Conclude

Virginia Satir (a trainer) expresses a wish for all of us:

*I believe the greatest gift I can conceive of having from anyone is to be seen, heard, understood and touched by them. The greatest gift I can give is to see, hear, understand and touch another person. When this is done, I feel contact has been made.*

During the lunch.  
Photo by H. Louis Burluson



**Training 3.** *Discrimination, aggression and violence at the workplace. What to do when you are a black or (im)migrant woman in a white setting.*

First was a lecture about the Law Constitution in the Netherlands. The question was asked do you know what the law constitution is and what it says. The trainer (Mr. M.T. Burleson) explained it to the participants. A PowerPoint presentation was made. As a strategy it was given the following form to understand the position of employees at the workplace, or to have an idea of what should be a workplace without discrimination and violence against BMR women. The following training has been given. The employees has to full in beneath form, by giving a score from 1 to 5. Here one (1) is not agree and 5 is strongly agree. All questions refer to the organisation in which employees work. The issues of this presentation are summarized in the checklist “Training violence against BMR women at the workplace”.

## Conclusion

The participants had no idea what really was and how to deal with sexual harassment at the workplace. They said it was clear to them and wanted all the information that was given. At the other hand they had never thought that with the list they could look what was missing in their company and how they could make the best of it. Difficult is if you don't have a head of the office that stand behind this. Then it becomes very difficult. A strategy that was given was to show how important it is to participate in social activities at the workplace and try to change the company culture, so that other people can see what is meant and together you are stronger.

Checklist: Training Violence against BMR Women at the Workplace

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### **Mission and vision: Indicators (Scores 1 to 5)**

Equal treatment, respect and equality are central

The vision is translated into a discrimination-free code

The code has been translated into the social competence and cultural sensitivity.

### **Culture of the company: Indicators (Scores 1 to 5)**

Everyone is already been treated as an individual

Everyone is treated as an equal member of the same society

Patterns of exclusion are not tolerated

Prejudice is not tolerated

There is mutual service

There is attention to what others need

There is cooperation where necessary and possible

There is also space to work independently

There is an open communication (dialogue)

There is an atmosphere of mutual trust

**Management: Indicators (Scores 1 to 5)**

Employees are helped to develop products and do services

The organisation is an interactive network, no vertical hierarchy. Effective leaders work across the organisation, they are not on top.

Strategies arise from the network. Not: the manager determines everything, the rest carries out.

Managers have a high Emotional Intelligence (EO)

The positive energy of employees is brought to the surface.

Employees are concerned, on the bases of the correct assessment, taking the context into account.

All employees receive in the same way the opportunity to develop them self further.

**Employees: Indicators (Scores 1 to 5)**

The percentage of employees is a reflection of society

Everyone has skills that meets the goals of the organisation with people from different backgrounds

Employees are motivated and able to work well with people from different backgrounds.

No patterns of exclusion

**Structure: Indicators (Scores 1 to 5)**

The organisation is an interactive network. Everyone comes to his right, counts and is heard.

**Strategy: Indicators**

Products and services are accessible and available to all “customers, internally and externally

**Sexual harassment: Indicators (Scores 1 to 5)**

There are incidents of sexual harassment, which is insufficient occurred.

There are jokes about sex, even in presence of colleagues who do not appreciate this. As a women I quickly would feel uncomfortable in certain departments.

There is a confidential person or a complaint commission within the company

In our company there are rules/agreements on dealing with all forms of harassments.

Leaders led by examples when it comes to good practices/manners and act against undesirable behaviour.

Some managers have difficulties with everything that is in their eyes Non-Dutch.

When someone shows undesirable behavior, all others even the managers, stands aloof.

In our company I have sometimes felt sexually harassed.

In our company there is a safe working environment for black and migrant women.

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**Training 4. Methodologies and Strategies to Support Self-Help Groups****What Self-Help Groups Are**

Self-help groups, also known as mutual help, mutual aid, or support groups, are groups of people who provide mutual support for each other. In a self-help group, the members share a common problem, often a common disease or addiction.

## Important for Self-Help Groups

In their book, *Redefining Self-Help*, Riessman and Carroll (1995) suggest that all examples of self-help, whether they be individual, group community, or nation, have one thing in common:

- promotion of latent inner strengths.
- Self-help emphasizes self-determination,
- self-reliance,
- self-production,
- self-empowerment.

It mobilizes the internal resources of the person, the group or the community.

## The Goal for Self-Help Groups

Their mutual goal is to help each other to deal with, if possible to heal or to recover from, this problem. There are contradictory meanings in the terms of “self-help” and “support”: self-help brings together two central but disparate themes as individualism and cooperation.

## Empowerment

One possible effect of this peer model is empowerment. Self-help group members are dependent on themselves, each other, the group, perhaps a spiritual power. Together they learn to control the problem in their lives.

## Definition of Violence and Self-help group

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) defines violence against women as:

*any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.*

Why? Women who are victims of violence are able to take a fundamental step within the group: to come out of a lonely, isolated situation (ridden with feelings of guilt and shame) and, at their own pace, to change their perceptions of the problem, themselves and their relationships.

What happens? Women who join a self-help group soon come to cherish it when they are understood and listened to respectfully showing or marked by proper respect. When the women feel others believe them and trust their word, they gain self-confidence. They begin to feel valued, and that their opinions matter.

How? In situations of domestic violence, the self-help group, nonprofessional organization formed by people with a common problem or situation, for the purpose of pooling resources, gathering information, and offering mutual support, services, or care is an effective answer that incorporates the individual,



subjective perspectives of the women who are victims of violence and also addresses the social dimension of the problem (by questioning a society that promotes the subordination of women).

### **Domestic Violence Strategy**

Domestic violence is a health, legal, economic, educational, developmental and human rights problem.

### **Strategy**

It should be designed to operate across a broad range of areas depending upon the context in which they are delivered. Key areas for intervention include:

- advocacy and awareness raising , education for building a culture of non-violence
- training
- resource development
- direct service provision to victim survivors and perpetrators
- networking and community mobilization
- direct intervention to help victim survivors rebuild their lives
- legal reform
- monitoring interventions and measures
- data collection and analysis
- early identification of ‘at risk’ families, communities, groups, and individuals.

These areas are not mutually exclusive; interventions touch several areas at once.

### **Five Underlying Principles**

Above all, five underlying principles should guide all strategies and interventions attempting to address domestic violence:

- prevention
- protection
- early intervention
- rebuilding the lives of victim-survivors
- accountability

### **An Effective Strategy**

An effective strategy is one that is designed to be culture and region-specific, providing victim-survivors easy access to wide-ranging services, and involving the community and individual stakeholders in the design of interventions.

**Training 5.** *Migrant women's rights and specific norms and legislation at National, European and International level.*

The general aim of the training meeting is: informing and enabling BMR and ethnic minority women who are at risk or are suffering from various forms of violence to reflect upon the existing opportunities to get access to legal, social, health and job counselling as well as women's anti-violence related services and support groups. Moreover, they will be trained in peer-support methodologies and techniques. Subsequently, they will contribute to setting up and supporting the networking among BMR women as well as between the latter and local services. In this training special emphasis will be at National, European and International legal matters. It was necessary to have clear the definitions of what special words mean. The aim of this specific training is to:

- inform BMR women about the human rights at national, European and International level;
- give recommendations of how BMR women can make better use of their human rights;
- elaborate ideas for good media attentions about BMR rights.

The following definitions were clearly mentioned from the article 3 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence:

- a) “violence against women”
- b) “domestic violence”
- c) “gender”
- d) “gender based violence against women”
- e) “victim”
- f) “women”, that includes girls under the age of 18.

**Rights for Equal Opportunities and Treatment**

- Equal access to resources for income generation
- Not only formal equality, but equality laws to enforce and achieve results
- Rules against discrimination, that is against social construction, exclusion mechanism, which denies women the right to own development
- Active control of direct and indirect discrimination in both public and private sphere
- Straightening of discrimination by temporary measures
- After ratification of European and International norms, the state is legally obliged to have rules against discrimination on women
- The state must take measures to ensure the rights of women and addressing disparities

## **U.N. Framework**

Following the U.N. International statements and Conventions from Mexico (1975) to Vienna (1993) Women are not Victims, but Citizens with Equal Rights and Gender inequality is a matter of human rights and governance.

Human Rights Approach contains a paradigm shift, from Vienna (1993), to new policy frameworks:

- Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (December 1993), and Special Rapporteur on VAW (UN Human rights Commission);
- International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), Cairo 1994: Basic Reproductive Rights are Human Rights;
- Beijing Platform for Action (1995);
- World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR, Durban 2001);
- UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000); UNSCR 1820 to Stop Violence and Sexual Abuse in Armed Conflict (2008); UNSCRs 1888 and 1889 (2009): VAW is considered a war crime.

## **European Normative and Legal Frameworks**

- Treaty of Lisbon: Equality and human rights of persons belonging to a minority is a common value.
- Women's Charter (2010);
- EU Strategy for Equality between women and men (2010-2015);
- EU Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (2011)

## **Training 6. *Sexual Abuse and Reproductive Rights***

### **Objectives**

- to increase awareness about sexual violence , intimidation and reproductive rights and violations and the consequences of these violations for themselves and for women and children worldwide;
- to ensure participants know where they can ask for help when they or a friend are a victim of domestic violence;
- to inform women on the subject and on what to do whenever they need (professional) help. This underlines the importance of trainers being experienced in the field of primary prevention and professional.

### **Intervention**

- to enhance empowerment of black, migrant and other ethnic minority women;
- to give guidance to the group without cultural bias so women can freely share their thoughts and feelings.

In this training we will discuss the boundaries of our conversation. To expand, the participants will be able to establish what they do and do not want to share and any discomfort they may encounter. The objective here is to establish a safe environment where participants are able to share their opinions from their specific cultural background without fear of reprisal.

### **Sexual Abuse**

A definition and explanation was given about the subject of sexual abuse. Sexual abuse involves unwanted intimate/sexual contact with another individual. The perpetrator (violation) often commits sexual abuse against another for the purpose of sexual satisfaction, gratification and control and/or a perceived notion of entitlement. What makes sexual abuse a crime is that the victim is unwilling or unable to give consent.

Sexual abuse is most often about power, thus vulnerable targets are often chosen. Parents and relatives may abuse small children or female family members. Strangers may abuse children. Caretakers may abuse the handicapped. Husbands may abuse wives. Teachers may abuse students. Priests may abuse altar boys and girls. Guards may abuse prisoners. Sexual assault can occur between any gender and age group and can include more than one perpetrator.

Sexual abuse, includes but is not limited to: unwanted touching, threats, penetration, sexual activities-like stripping and performing sexual acts, rape, mutilation, prostitution, forced marriage, forced pregnancy etc.

### **Reproductive Rights**

The World Health Organization defines reproductive rights as follows. Reproductive rights rest on the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. They also include the right of all to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence.

Reproductive rights may include some or all of the following: the right to legal or safe abortion, the right to birth control, the right to access quality reproductive healthcare, and the right to education and access in order to make free and informed reproductive choices. Reproductive rights may also include the right to receive education about contraception and sexually transmitted infections, and freedom from coerced sterilization, abortion, and contraception, and protection from gender-based practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and male genital mutilation (MGM).

Also in this part of the training is explained some international norm and legal rules about violence and discrimination against women and children.

## Gender Rights under National Law

Article 1 of the Constitution forbids discrimination on the basis of gender. Gender equality is overseen by the Ministry for Social Affairs and Emancipation. Since 1978, the Netherlands has enacted an “emancipation policy” (*emancipatiebeleid*) which strives to achieve equality and reform in issues such as parental leave; work, care and income; power and decision-making; human rights. In the Emancipation Plan for 2006-2010, the government’s goal is to “have more women work more hours, and to bring about better utilization of their talents and qualities”.

After this some questions were asked to start a discussion. Questions were for example:

- What is the legal standing of women’s sexual and reproductive rights in your native country? Independence, relationships, marriage, child birth?
- How has the status of women in your culture affected your life with regards to your perceived self-image?
- What are the cultural rules surrounding sex and reproductive rights?
- What are the potential consequences of not adhering to cultural norms?
- How do you reconcile the differences in their native countries views and that of Holland? Is it a challenge, do you welcome the change?

In this section participants will have the opportunity to discuss their feelings and thoughts, as BMR women on their sexual and reproductive rights.

- How do you see yourself as an individual?
- How do you see yourself as a woman/as a man?
- How do you see yourself both sexually and reproductively in a cultural context?
- How do you see yourself in a Dutch context?
- Do you feel protected?
- Do you agree or disagree with the definition of sexuality?
- What are your thoughts on sexuality?
- Do you feel more comfortable seeking help within their own culture than to seek help from outsiders?
- What are some perceived barriers?

To this, some of the respondents stated that they feel free in the Netherlands in terms of sexual and reproductive rights, as it states.

## Other Sexual and Reproductive Crimes

- FGM
- Forced Marriage
- Honour Killings
- Prostitution
- Sexual Harassment

## **FGM – Female Genital Mutilation**

No reliable figures are available on the number of girls that are actually being circumcised in the Netherlands, or the number of women/girls living in the Netherlands that have been circumcised in their home country. The government estimates that per year at least 50 girls become a victim of FGM.

Since 2010, an Amsterdam hospital has specialised in reconstructive surgery for circumcised women. The operations are a relatively new development in plastic surgery. The hospital team therefore works closely with Pharos, a Dutch knowledge centre specialising in refugee and migrant healthcare, and the Dutch gynecology association (NVOG). Dr Refaat Karim, the man behind the surgical team, has now carried out two of the operations, the first of their kind in the Netherlands. In The Netherlands there here is little medical literature on the subject and the long-term effects on the patient are unknown. Quality of life is expected to improve, but this will probably vary according to the individual. And not every woman is a suitable candidate for surgery. In some cases it's considered irresponsible to operate for medical or psychological reasons.

## **FGM and Women's Rights**

The human rights and international norms which are relevant for FGM can be found in international conventions (UN-treaties, European Convention on Human Rights), consensus documents (such as Cairo Declaration and Beijing Platform for Action) and views of international bodies on the implementation of human rights obligations in Netherlands.

## **FGM and Women**

FGM is an expression of unequal positions between men and women, and is maintained by traditional attitudes in which women are viewed as inferior to men. All women have control over their own sexuality and reproduction, and the right to satisfying and safe sex life. FGM is occurring within various cultures and religions; the rejection of FGM does not imply the rejection of a culture or religion as such.

## **Forced Marriage**

Every year, dozens of girls with a Moroccan, Turkish and Pakistani background fail to return to the Netherlands after the holidays. Forced arranged marriages often lead to violence connected to family honor. Jantiene Kriens (Rotterdam Executive Councilor) stated that:

*We have been working on honor-related violence for some time now. In other words: the threat of violence against girls in the family. You often see that a forced arranged marriage leads to honor-related violence. So we want to take action first by preventing forced arranged marriages.*

The participants were very interested and some have experienced this or know someone in their families. Lots of questions and stories were told. Most of all was the information that participants get. Including the reader with lots of articles. At the end they were very excited with this training and asked if there will be a follow up on this. The advice was to start a support group with people that are experienced and are interested. When they have a group of at least 10 persons they can contact us and we will arrange specific trainings.

There were 4 young males and 8 young females at this meeting with 1 assistant and the trainer.

### **Recommendations Training**

With regards to experience and training, it is the recommendation of this researcher that more emphasis be placed on continuous and more frequent, specified training of individuals partaking in fields which involve gender violence. Although, it has already been made clear that the phrasing of the survey question makes it difficult to properly assess the hours maintained, it is clear that there is a deficiency in training opportunities.

### **Volunteers**

Although strides have been made to meet the requirements of new mandates which protect women's rights, such as CEDAW, and the Beijing Platform for Action, (1995) in terms of application the Netherlands is still very heavily reliant on the services of volunteers in order to reach many women. This is demonstrated by the fact that 38% of respondents at the Dutch survey (see Part 1 of this Report) were volunteers. Heavy reliance on volunteers as may pose a problem in terms of qualifications in dealing with victims. To expand, the expertise demonstrated by a trained social worker or psychologist in the field of domestic violence or gender-based violence could be argued as far more vast than that of a volunteer. And so, there could be an increased risk of misinformation or misguidance if not approached carefully and with strict guidelines.

### **Violence against Women**

36% of respondents at the Dutch survey claimed that women with low self-confidence are the most at risk of abuse. Second are women who cannot handle conflict situations. That being said, empowerment is crucial in allowing many women to achieve the emancipation they so desperately crave. This can be achieved in various ways, such as workshops, intercultural gatherings, media and indeed legislation which protects the rights of women and children. 63% of respondents claim that power abuse is the most prevalent type of abuse. Therefore, when we consider the regulations which govern women brought over from overseas, greater legal and social protections and in fact racial and cultural integration initiatives must be explored in order to allow women to exercise their rights freely and effectively so that they do not feel compelled to remain in abusive situations to maintain their status and livelihoods.

## Network

56% of respondents agree that a network of private and public services that work on gender violence led by BMR and white Dutch women should be established and 33% believe that rules governing a social and culturally sensitive approach to women should be established across all agencies. These large numbers indicate a definitive need for better guidelines and more research and appreciation for the specific needs of women, specifically BMR women.



Photo by H. Felter.

## 13.2. Self-Help Groups

### Self-Help Group 1. *Sexual Abuse, Sexual Intimidation and Reproductive Rights*

#### Introduction

The self-help group took place in October 2012 with 10 participants with various backgrounds, including, but not limited to, Surinamese-Dutch, Moroccan-Dutch, Asian-Dutch, Eastern European and Caribbean. The meeting took place in Amsterdam consisting of two parts. The discussion and information session involved two topics, namely, “*Sexual Harassment in the Workplace*” and “*Sexual Abuse, Sexual Intimidation and Reproductive Rights*”. Those present were comprised of both men and women, with the majority of participants being female. One thing that should be noted as positive about the session was that both men and women felt free in their participation and spoke openly about their experiences and opinions. That being said, we are pleased and appreciative of the contributions made by the participants.

#### Opening

The nature of the meeting was explained in depth and information on the project, partners and goals attributed to the participants involvement given so that they could proceed with the utmost knowledge before the commencement of the discussion.



## **Sexual Abuse, Sexual Intimidation and Reproductive Rights**

Definitions of the topic, terms as well as definitions of terms such as cultural relativism and female sexuality were given. The rights of women under international and domestic Dutch law were also explored and explained. The questions discussed involved questions such as: How do you see yourself as an individual?, How do you see yourself as a woman/as a man? and How do you see yourself in a Dutch context? Do you feel protected? Do you agree or disagree with the definition of sexuality? What are your thoughts on sexuality? To this, some of the respondents stated that they feel free in the Netherlands in terms of sexual and reproductive rights:

*A lot of possibilities in Holland with regards to controlling how many kids you have, many types of contraception. GGD (Health care Service), so you can do a free SOA test. Abortion is also possible, but I think there is an evaluation of the person seeking an abortion beforehand. Not sure, if it's difficult.*

However, there is a clear distinction made by one participant between the freedom she experiences in the Netherlands based on her current location in Amsterdam as opposed to the small town where she was raised:

*When I was younger I felt ashamed to get a pregnancy test. Especially in a small town where everyone knows you. In Amsterdam it's easier. It's because of the way people behave towards each other. People judge more in small towns, in Amsterdam people are more anonymous, more different, less judgment.*

This statement in conjunction with others indicates that within the Netherlands, there is clear division between liberalism and conservative standards in lifestyle. As such, some women feel more capable of enjoying their reproductive rights. For the men, they understood the questions asked, however, had some difficulty in providing expansive answers, responding more in the affirmative that they felt secure in their rights as men.

### **Film – Burden of Proof (Witness, Al Jazeera)**

The film watched was about the native population of Alaska and the women in the tribes there who had suffered generational sexual abuse and violence. It covered the experiences of many women of various ages and different forms of sexual violence. The film was a success, uniting the emotions of those present whilst tackling the topic of sexual violence against a minority group in a large, western society. The participants were appreciative of the fact that the film dealt with the topics from such a unique minority perspective. As such, a large discussion emerged out of the viewing.

Two stories in particular are of interest as they touch closely upon the film subject matter:

*When I was a little girl I was outside playing in my neighbour backyard. He picked me up and help on to me for a while, which due to my age seemed normal at the time. But then he started touching my breasts. At first, I didn't know what was happening to me, but then it started to feel very bad. A few years later my parents were talking in the kitchen about the neighbour, they said that he was being investigated for molesting his two nieces. I said "I can believe that". My father turned and said I don't believe it. I was upset. It shocked me how easily he could dismiss something like that just because he was the neighbour. But I knew the truth because it happened to me years before.*

*I was dating this guy for a while and one night we were lying in bed. He wanted to fool around and have sex, but I did not want to. I told him "No", but he got more and more aggressive. I started to fight him off and he began to tear away my clothes. He ripped off my top and he managed to rip off my underwear by the time I fought him off. I manages to diffuse the situation. I told my friend what had happened soon afterward and she was outraged. She was also outraged by the fact that I was so calm when I told her. It wasn't until I heard her repeat it back to me out loud that I realized that anything serious had happened. I became very angry and I confided in my Mother and Father. They didn't care. My mother was friends with my boyfriend, who was older than me at the time. She ignored that anything had happened and so did my Dad. I was so hurt and upset. I expected my Father to go over to the guy and bash his fucking face in. But they didn't do anything. I'm going to an event this weekend where my ex-boyfriend is doing the photography. My family is taking him with them in the car. They said if I don't want to see him I can take the train. I was so shocked that they would want me to take the train. But I'm not going to let him think that I will just stop living my life because of him.*

Participants divulged that they have noticed a great deal of secrecy around molestation and sexual abuse in their lives and acknowledged that they know many victims of sexual violence. They noted that help lines for sexual abuse can only go so far in that it can't stop the violence immediately. Only the police can do that. One participant also describes how her mother's failure to address her instance of sexual assault stems from the fact that she too was abused and did not really have anyone to help her. Her perpetrator was never punished for his crimes against her, so she had to learn to forgive and forget. Through the expansion of the group discussion, in unison it was agreed that perhaps her behaviour towards her daughters trauma may be the result of the fact that she neither received support for her trauma when she was little and therefore is unable to give it sufficiently at present. The participant felt very supported by the group.

Another participant described being molested on a tram when she was a little girl. She explained how people on the tram could see what was happening but no one helped her. She didn't realize what was happening at first and then felt very uncomfortable, unable to tell her mother until days later. She received support from her mother, but she saw the perpetrator again on the same tram later on. He was never reported. However, she saw the same thing happen to a little girl

when she was older and intervened. Upon learning this story, the group began discussing ways that people can intervene in such situations, one participant offered the example of going up to the perpetrator and asking “Sir, do you know what time it is?” thus letting the violator know that he is being watched. The participants enjoyed this creative part of the discussion.

### **Other Sexual and Reproductive Crimes**

In this section of the self-help group, the discussion involved topics such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), prostitution, honour killing, forced marriage and sexual harassment. Information was given as to where participants can find information on legal help, medical/psychiatric assistance including FGM reversal, which is available in the Netherlands. Furthermore, participants were made aware of funding efforts being made by the Dutch government to support women’s health and legal rights and different high level discussions that have taken place. There was also a portion of the presentation which covered Muslim women in a Dutch context. Forced marriage was covered at great length since it is a subject that is receiving direct and aggressive attention from the Dutch government as was of great interest to the participants. Many of them were shocked by the information they received of FGM and forced marriage. Some were unaware of the degree to which it was happening and were interested by the strides that were being made to tackle these issues.

### **Sexual Harassment**

The topic of sexual harassment was discussed at length by men and women in the group. One male participant explained that in his industry, there are not that many women who are present. He explains that this is due to heavy lifting and the few women that are working with him work extremely hard. He did not divulge whether or not the women in question experienced any sexual harassment but he pointed it out as a potential form of discrimination. This did spark a discussion amongst others more so, about sexual discrimination:

*My mother was a carpenter for 25 years. She had to overcome a lot of judgments from people because she was a woman doing work that some thought was just for me. Even though she has her own company.*

*My father’s ex-wife was working for a company for 5 years. She was a good worker and they never had any problems with her in the past. But then she got pregnant and had to go on maternity leave. Out of the blue they called her and fired her without any valid reason.*

It was difficult for them to express their feelings but general sense of the group was that there was an evident social and cultural tension between white Dutch and Dutch-minority groups in the Netherlands.

## Reaching Out and Starting a Group

The previous discussion on social and cultural tension in the Netherlands led to a discussion on what we can do to reach out to each other and stimulate a discussion without offending anyone. At this stage, a lesson was given on how to start a self-help group so that discussions like the one held for TIYE International can be created. Furthermore, one participant offered the following suggestion:

*When I was a kid we used to have to put on these dramatic performances led by actors and some kind of social workers. We would have different topics that we would have to express in a performance. It was a lot of fun because we had to figure out what characters we wanted to be. And then we had to figure out how we were going to tell the story. I know now as an adult, that we covered some important topics that I didn't appreciate then. It taught me something important because they gave us issues and maybe problems and we had to take control of it and figure out how we were going to handle and express it and then figure out our own story and ending.*

Perhaps organizing artistic and creative events is an avenue through which to reach others, especially small children.

## Conclusion

The meeting concluded late in the evening. During the meeting the participants had booklets provided by TIYE International which contained articles, information and constructive pages for the self-help group. The participants were able to make closing remarks and ask any questions. It ended very positively with many of them exchanging Facebook information afterward. The information presented was also forwarded to their respective emails so that they have access to and can pass on any and all of the information necessary to help and educate others.

### **Self-Help Group 2.** *Violence during courtship (dating violence) and start a self-help group*

This was a meeting with young (white, black and migrant) girls and boys 15 – 20 years. There were 12 of them. (2 whites, 2 from Suriname, 1 from China, 2 from Ethiopia, 2 from Somalia, 1 from Antilleans and 1 from Ghana and 1 from Philippines. All have the Dutch nationality (4 boys and 11 girls) and are in school.

We start the meeting with asking who had experience with violence, and if they know what kind of violence there are. At the time of this meeting, big news was the “facebook killing” in the Netherlands. Teenagers in the age of 14 and 16 years had killed a friend of 15 years because of some wordings between two girlfriends through facebook. One of the girls had ordered a boyfriend to kill the other girl, and so happen that this girl was killed in her house by this boyfriend.

In the paper it was stated what follows:

*The Hague – A Dutch court Monday jailed a teenage boy for stabbing a 15-year-old girl to death and trying to kill her father after she had allegedly posted derogatory comments about another girl on Facebook. The boy, identified as 15-year-old Jing Hua K., was jailed for a year and ordered to spend at least two years in a psychiatric facility for the January 14 murder in the eastern city of Arnhem. The sentence is the maximum in the Netherlands for a minor.*

### **What is Dating Violence?**

Dating violence is a form of domestic violence. However, this does not always take place at home. “Dating violence” means that already during the courtship violence is used. Three quarters of the women appears at the beginning of an abusive relationship teenager to be (14-20 years). The partner was in many cases their first real boyfriend, which they had their first romantic experiences.

### **What Are the Forms of Violence?**

It can be all kinds of violence, like profanity, insults, jealousy, isolation from friends and family, ignorance, destroy personal belongings, tell secrets, hiding, hair pulling, unwanted sexual touching, use force to have sex, forcing sex, rape and sexual assault. Even sex with the other when the other is under influence of alcohol and/or drug belongs to sexual abuse.

### **Violent Behaviour via Internet and Mobile Smart Phones**

Also via internet and smart phones you can have to do with violent behaviour. For example verbal abuse while chatting. Or nasty text messages. But even with severe forms of sexual violence over the internet. Guard your limits well. Ask for help if you do not know how you can stop this violent behaviour.

### **Film – Lover Boys (Witness, Al Jazeera)**

The film we viewed was called “Lover boys” and dealt with young Moroccan-Dutch men that recruit young girl and force them into prostitution to make money. The film was powerful and garnered a strong reaction from the viewers. The discussion that ensued was about cultural division and anger that is felt by some members of the Dutch minority population:

*Could it be because he feels that he doesn't feel that he fits in. It's wrong what they do, but they are also in a desperate situation.*

*Perhaps if he spoke and dressed in a way that was considered culturally normal, he would have a better chance, but if he did, would it make a difference?*

*It's should be dealt with in the community because of familiarity and the possibility of receiving more credit from a troubles boy if you are a part of his community.*

*It's hard to talk about Moroccan culture sometimes because of judgment, it causes a*

*fight with one of my friends who is Dutch and married to a Moroccan man. The silence surrounding the social tensions in Holland follows everyone, Dutch or Moroccan.*

## **Signals**

Do you feel that your friend uses a form of violence? Or are you afraid that this will happen? Does he or she go over your limits? Talks as soon as possible with someone you trust. Call the support centre. They can watch together with you for signals or signs. They can also help you to decide to deal with it.

## **Personal Stories: Banga**

The Banga List (Sluts list) made its debut in 2012 the Netherlands, but this street slang word exist a little longer. Banga means a slut or whore. The origin of the word banga is connected with the English word for banging, it is also associated with the verb bang (fuck), which we also find in gangbang.

Distributing a banga list is now punishable (because you cannot just affect someone's reputation or honour). A girl friend said the following about it:

*Because of a stupid banga list, a good friend of mine committed suicide. Shame on you!*

Some young people (males mostly) email and use social media to each other by sending a list with true names of girls who are easy to poke for sex or who they want to teas or nag. It is often not only a list of names, but also is often added an additional description of how 'easy' the girl in question is. Often these lists are not based on the truth, but is they are composed by a couple of teenage boys that likes teasing or nagging girls.

Many schools and girls have now given notice of to the police against the makers of this banga lists. Some statements were for example:

*I do not understand some young adolescents, they want to have "it" so early and easy... it makes no sense to ruin someone's life like that.*

*Guys do really think easy about it and play the macho, but I know that they will soon have a murder on their conscience, is that what they want? I don't think so.*

## **Self-Help Group 3. Empowering BMR women against gender violence and start self-help groups**

### **Acquaintance**

All participants will have the opportunity to introduce themselves and also determine what personal information they want to share with the group. These include cultural background, education, work experience, current occupation and experience with domestic violence.

## Rules and Layout Workshop

Magdalena Pattianakotta and Jane Biekman, who were leading the training explained what will happen during his meeting and what is expected from the participants. With the help of the Reader “Support Group” she explains exactly what will happen and what methods will be used for this purpose. Since most of the participants don’t know each other, a very important agreement was made. That is that all personal stories and experiences related to this training, will remain in confidence and that each opinion is respected. No one judges the other and no one has to feel ashamed. One participant, was very pleased with this and said she find it a very pleasant way for communication, especially because she had lots of certain emotional experiences in the past period.

*SPEAK OUT!*, is a project that has broad support at European level to domestic and violence against Black, Migrant and Refugee Women to address. The goal of the workshop is to find out how domestic violence can be further ‘avoid’ and how the word of *SPEAK OUT!* can be “spread”.

From the group suggestions came such as support, exchange of experience and expertise, build tools and find solutions to solve this problem.

“*How can among other things victims be prevented to go shopping for help?*” was an important question in the group. Also attention has to be paid to cultural differences, the problems victims faced and struggles and why there is so much shame. Based on the cultural backgrounds of the participants Surinamese, Antillean, Hindustani and Molukken, examples were cited about shame, breaking taboos, trust, feel safe, psychological violence (humiliation), family violence, honour killings, financial dependence, withdrawal police charges, trauma, sex, alcohol use, an overprotective parenting, generational shifts, dominance of the man, becoming too much like European women, etc. Anyone got the space to exchange personal experiences. The stories are intense and sometimes very emotional.

## The Ball Game

After some mental effort of about fifteen minutes spent on physical interaction. It is an energetic Ball game in which the participants stand in a circle and throw an imaginary ball to each other. The game is somewhat difficult in the beginning, because before you throw “the ball” you have to clap in your hands, than throw the ball toward a participant without calling her name and clap again in your hands. Because the participants don’t really know each other’s name, the game is still insufficient and difficult but there is lots of humour. After a few practices, you may use the name of the person you throw the ball to. After that the game ran smoother and more enjoyable. The rationale of the game is: that who bounces the ball, can expect him back!

## Empowerment

Education, travel, make choices, strength, inner motivation, self-reflection, assumptions, connection, open to innovation, helping each other, need, knowledge

sharing, transfer, social contact, open minded and artistic forms such as music, painting, writing etc. the participants agree and or see the usefulness of this. The conceptions of spirituality were quite different. A number of participants are deep believers of Christianity, some seeking and some participants are due to certain circumstances freethinkers. Everyone respected each other's opinion, there was heated debate, but the essence is that only you determined what religion means to you and how it keeps you self-sustaining.

### **Support Circle with Discussion**

The participants get a colour assignment. This time it is colouring the Support Circle. A circle that is divided into smaller circles with the centre ring as the core and the outer circle to support those further away from the participant. The amount of circles that are filled indicate how much support you as a woman feel that you get.

In small groups, the groups with all participants reviewed and substantiated their colourings. The types of support that are central include security, trust, having fun and motivating. God, yourself, the role of a mother, having a family, friends, employer and / or colleagues, your social network and the government are important pillars for the participants in both good and difficult times. Because of the difference in age from 26 to 60 years of the participants, the support circles also rearranged. Soon it is concluded that the support circle associated with age, the circumstances and the stage of life.

### **Dirty Laundry with Discussion**

Finally it's time for the final and most therapeutic task of is training. On the desk is a large white sheet spread on which participants can express their frustrations through text and/or drawings.

Using markers everyone starts frantically writing and colours. The various issues related to relationships, the role of men, violence and the role of the black woman in the Dutch film called *Only But Neat People* are discussed. The "dirty laundry" is literally put outside. There are discussions, laughter and especially understanding is shown. Nothing is wrong, because everything is shared is part of their personal experiences and beliefs.

### **Evaluation and Discussion**

After completing the evaluation forms is the last opportunity for questions from the participants.

### **Closing**

Mrs. Pattianakotta is about to conclude the workshop. Everyone was thanked for their presence and contribution. Again, the participants emphasized the theme to identify, prevent and spread the word. The report of this day is available within two weeks on request at TIYE International.



## Result of the Day

TIYE goes along with the coordinators Magdalene and Jane to watch the quality of the training, keys on the basis of the commitment, commands in the readers, the evaluation forms and the report of the training.

## Conclusion

- The training participants experienced this as very useful;
- The group gave a feeling of security and the discussion topics were good;
- Everyone has actively participated and something to learn from the training;
- The expectations were different, but acceptable;
- The attendance was good and enriching content;
- There is a need for support groups especially for women in emergency situations; experiences, opinions and knowledge sharing is not only liberating, but also therapeutic;
- Communicate and provides revealing stories which should be knowledgeable guides.

## Recommendations

- That TIYE continues to keep her role as in this case in cooperation with *SPEAK OUT!*
- The support groups should develop further.

## 13.3. Public Seminars

**12.14.2012:** *Break Through and SPEAK OUT!*

Empowering women and the girl-child against gender violence

**Opening:** *The context of the SPEAK OUT! European transnational partnership and empowering the international lobby activities of the Black Migrant and Refugee Women by gender based violence – drs. Hellen Felter.*

### OPENING:

- **Welcome**
- **TIYE International**
- ***SPEAK OUT!* partnership**
- **Seminar programme**

Hellen Felter did the opening of the seminar. Ms. Felter gave a short historical introduction of the association TIYE International and the *SPEAK OUT!* project.

The experts participating in this seminar will draw a clear picture of the current status of the gender violence subject. The definition, the conceptual context, the mechanisms involved, the persistent of gender violence, the usage of interconnected approach methods and more.

The objectives of this seminar are: awareness raising; promotion of cross sections cooperation from civil society institutes; the small scale follow-up networking activities to keep the subject on the political and NGO agenda; to summarise the international achievements as a roadmap on how to attract attention for the position of women and the girl child. How to empower to cope with gender violence.

### **The lobby of the Black Migrant and Refugee Women addressing the cultural and traditional constraints of gender based violence – drs. Özden Yalim**

#### **CULTURE AND TRADITION:**

- HTIB
- HTKB and HTIB
- Honor related violence
- Men supportive of the battle for equal rights and empowerment

Hollanda Türkiyeli İşçiler Birliği (HTIB), a Turkish labour organisation that was established to protect the rights of the Turkish guest workers who came during the 1960's. In 1999 the statues were changed allowing the organisation to have a broader action oriented scope then the previous labour issues only. The

target was to reach for a wider target group and to create an organisation based on multicultural principles.

HTIB board members became active with trying to be vocal on issues such as on the Dutch multiculturalism and where to fit policies of ethnic profiled communities. Furthermore the organisation had the internal challenge to bring the following themes to the forefront namely:

- Equal rights for women and men by getting more participating activities between HTKB (women wing) and the dominantly male orientated HTIB;
- Human rights discussions;
- Tentative subjects as gay and lesbian rights, honour related violence against women, arranged marriages, youth disruptive behaviour;
- Education.

A nation-wide campaign was promoted in 2000 to obtain transparency options about the workings of honour related violent activities. As a result of this a covenant was signed between, grass-root organisations, the police, the municipalities and other relevant support and protection organisations.

HTIB kick started a 'living room project' for men with the Islamic faith compliance to be open about the existence of violent tendencies based on cultural and traditional dogmas.

The purpose was to open up towards an environment of equality in the domestic setting and help to eradicate violence. The living room project was broadcasted via the Turkish media and tearooms. The main questions were to notify

the public especially the concern communities upon prevention in honour related violence.

How to be perceptive of the early stages when a pact has been sworn in within a family? How to be cautious and find measurements to protect the prospective victims of the honour killing plot? How to guarantee the safety of young women from family ties and violent anger?

In several provinces discussion groups were set up to be contact point in neighbourhoods. This trajectory is considered to be a good practice because of the awareness raising, understanding and open communication strategies.

## Discussion of *SPEAK OUT!* Research Results – Mr. Henry Keisha

### RESULTS OF TIYE RESEARCH:

- Discussions with experts and within Self-help groups
- Definitions of VAW
- Indicators and fact

The Dutch survey of *SPEAK OUT!* project was conducted by Henry Keisha. The five partners agreed on an extensive questionnaire. In order to discuss the Dutch survey's results in the local context, there were different meetings planned: 3 focus group meetings; 3 discussion group

meetings; 6 training group meetings; 3 self- help and supportive group sessions; a public seminar.

Mr. Keisha focussed the discussion on young people perspective. The young people have found drama and theatre skills to express their voice on the subject. There is the example of letters from the police disseminated at schools wherein the police explain about the help that is available if young people encounter incidents such as forced marriages, forced travel to the native countries of their parents and they suspect that a form of circumcision is going to be involved. Young people could receive immediate support and protection by calling a direct number or emailing to a specific contact. In the PowerPoint slides the percentages of young people affected by violent behaviour is being expressed.

One of the most denigrating occurrence of violence against young women is the existence of “Banga list”. A Banga list is an enumeration of girls who are to be considered easy in the way of sexual expression and involvement. The perpetrators who construct these Banga list give points of likeliness to the named girls who would perform sexual favours easily on demand. The Banga list is a horrible form of bullying that undermines the reputations of innocent young girls. These list are being distributed through the internet mostly without the knowledge of the girls concerned. When the girl as a victim becomes aware of such a list it is too late to retract the information from the various social media and they have to undergo unnecessary shameful periods of hurt, despair and humiliation. During this period there is almost nothing they can do to save their tarnished reputations that has been viciously targeted. In some extreme instances the girls

committed suicide just to escape the shame of the untrue stories. The good practices, the lobby action orientated strategies based on the *Break Through* methodology and key developments encountered out of the questionnaires.

## **Taboo and Human Right Violations – drs. Thera van Osch**

### **TABOO AND HUMAN RIGHTS:**

- **Taboo around VAW offences**
- **Revising informational materials and reeducating the target groups**
- **EU regulations**
- **Contemporary measurements**

As a gender specialist Thera van Osch took the audience through the efforts, dialogue status, the documentation and the important existing regulations that have been developed over the years because women from the South gave voice at international political platforms and kept the subject of fighting

against VAW on the agenda during UN World Conferences.

World Conferences held in Beijing, Nairobi, Mexico, Durban had far reaching effects and also showed which governments are genuinely on board. National government have the international guidelines on how to protect (young) women and the girl child against the many forms of violence they encounter. By ratifying the international agreements governments can ensure that their national law is in accordance with the international regulations.

The taboo around violence against women (VAW) is that victims feel the heavy burden of loyalty, shame and pressure from the family and this withholds them to break free of a cycle of violence.

In this seminar audience experts as Alem Desta, Rita Naloop and Hellen Felter gave examples on how the struggle to reach an unified front went up until the final day of the conference. The UN Special Rapporteur gave her all to ensure agreements of different factions so that the document could be carried and the regulation the conference were legitimised. Although the various UN Conferences gave the world progressive regulations many so called democratic and developed countries still will not sign up to the procedure of ratification and integration into national law and regulations.

Therefore it is not uncommon to see that the cross section integrated action orientated approach is much more progressive in countries in the South than in the West. It is always powerful to have the summarised actions of texts and resolutions which are available as legal framework in the battle to stop VAW. In 11-05-2011 the Convention on VAW was established. Belem do Para manifesto is finally completed in an EU equality framework

Ms. Van Osch also listed the developments of women's rights in the refugee and asylum seekers status.

The reflection of a world without violence and the action plan of the future because women and children are the ultimate victims when violence is perpetrated.

## Advisory procedures to stop or address the prevention of violence within dependency relationships – Mrs. Duska Sabljic

### ADVISORY PROCEDURES:

- Month of festivities one of mainly offences
- The faces of violence and victims of violence: who do you recognize
- The mechanism cycle of violence

As a prevention coordinator Duska Sabljic has been involved with the violence protection and prevention sector for more than 25 years. Duska works for VieJa in Utrecht a government supported institution. The excesses of violence has many ugly faces, hidden circumstances, silent and/or invisible victims. Ms. Sabljic

explains that during periods of festivities the occurrence of violence is much more prominent because of the built up tensions within (family) relations. It is also not a definite conclusion that the victim is always a women and that the perpetrator is a man. Society need to open their eyes to the facts as to better understand why violence still exist and persevere.

Where does domestic violence occur? Who are the likely target groups to become victims of violence? They are elderly i.e. think of financial exploitation and extortion; youth i.e. think of stalking. In the rescue, care and protection areas the assistance is concentrated towards:

- understanding the mechanisms of violence
- how to empower relevant target groups
- how to break down the cycle of oppression
- how to make effective use of the system approach methods
- the acknowledgement that children are always the victim in violent situations

In her work the emphasis is on creating responsible adult behaviour. Everybody is accountable. Transparency in the workings of dependency relationships. Attention nowadays is focused on violence against elderly persons and this can be in different circumstances:

- caring homes
- family environments
- regulatory and financial support institutions

In cases of stalking there is a device such as a mobile upon which the victim can press at any time of danger and the police or other rescue agencies will pick up the signal and handle from a familiar procedure because they already have the profile of the stalker. It is possible to have swift actions to protect the person who is a victim of the stalker.

The public has become more vocal about reporting instances of violence. It is not uncommon that children are standing up for their parents because they are concerned about a long term dependent and violent environment in which their parents coexist.

To stop violence it is necessary to open the dialogue with the offenders. Recognition of (early) signs of violence is a major step to prevent or stop violent relationships.

It is of utmost importance to educate relevant professionals to be aware of the reoccurring signs. For example: to educate general practitioners to tap into suspicious circumstances of patients who attend the medical practice regularly sometimes without evident marks or with repeated complaints that do not seem to heal. This GP are being instructed to ask in depth question in a sensitive matter just to unveil hidden violence offences. Also physiotherapist are given awareness raising trainings on how to detect signs of violence when there are specific physical problems (stiff neck, pelvis and ... (see the slide information).

The lessons learnt on rape victims 1950 and 1991 (Bosnia) and on how to recognize the signs: fear and anxiety; no sense of time; blood circulation; heart rhythm.

The 2013 the focus will be on the perpetrators and getting the light on them. The organization VieJa will have a collaboration with SPONDEA from Czech in Brno to address the issue of the dialogue with perpetrators. The good practice of working with fathers from ethnic communities will be added to ensure the success rate of this action to address stopping violence. The protection agencies are working more from a counsellor approach and ambulant care. Cooperation's partners of Vieja are De Waag and Altra.

After a question from Hellen Felter the call center costs of € 0,05 per minute were explained. The lines are open during working hours and VieJa does not have the authority to expel a perpetrator from a domestic environment. In those instances it is advise to contact the AMK.

## **Putting the discussion on Female Genital Mutilation within the just framework – Mrs. Istarlin Ismael**

### **FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION:**

- Health
- Addressing the target group
- Honour based violence

Istarlin Ismael is known as Stella and is the face of expertise on the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) issue. Ms. Ismael has been active on various themes concerning African women from the Horn of Africa. She address-

es human rights issues for more than thirteen years. Within the organisation African Sky she is one of the outspoken advocates. She outlined the plight of women from war-torn areas who became refugee. The priority changes when people faced extreme situations of survival in heavy battle areas.

Refugees who experience war violence need time and a sense of safety before they would come forward as victims. Their mind set will go to several stages of confusion and a need to find reassurances. Questions such as:

- where am I and why am I here?
- what do I miss as a person who has been uprooted from familiarised environments?
- what problems am I facing and which struggle should I confront first: the permit, the VAW, the FGM or other adaptation problems causing violent tension within families?
- who is experiencing the same emotional battle?

The women who are affected by the FGM subject have fought for this issue to be internationally recognized. The UN proclaimed day of February 6<sup>th</sup> is the yearly remembrance day for Worldwide attention for addressing Female Genital Mutilation. The UN has legal frameworks and regulations in place. FGM is a practice that exist in 28 countries therefore there must be awareness that this subject is not a one-way direction because people migrate and become citizen of the world carrying practices from their former cultural and traditional areas to other areas where the practice is not recognize from an early stage.

- Awareness about the pressure within families concerning the FGM practice must be promoted.
- Advocate immediate access to health practitioners for women affected by physical problems due to the circumcision. How to care for specific complaints
- Collaborate strongly with organisations in the countries of origin where the practice is still active.
- Advise child medical consultation agencies how to address the issue with parents from 0-6 year old infant. DO NOT be condescending by putting monitoring measurements because this offends the personal rights
- Acknowledge that women from the South have fought to categorise the FGM subject under a gender based violence structure and not solely under a health violence against women
- Acknowledge that integrated policies are needed to continue to stop or eradicate the FGM practice
- Advocate equality in citizenship to address mental, physical and economical violence

### **Ms. Sheila van der Bas from College of Human Rights.**

She is the director of this institution which was established at the 10<sup>th</sup> of October 2012. Van der Bas emphasized that signals from the wider civic society need to gathered to show genuine commitment of human rights regulations. The Netherland has yet to ratify the convention but NGO's and other organisation already bring into practice the good. She calls NGO's of Black, Migrant and Refugee women to participate in with their comments in the shadow reports so that their voices will also be heard.

Dr. Mustafa Ayrand, director of HTIB appealed to find a common agenda and join forces when needed and necessary to be a more impressive platform when policies are being constructed.

Hellen Felter did the closing of this seminar and indicted that in February 2013 there will be a follow-up and also a publication of the partnership findings and recommendations. Also she puts attention to the exposition of violence against women which is in the room.

### **Final Local Closing Seminar: *SPEAK OUT!* and *Break Through* (TIYE International, The Hague, 8 February 2013).**

The final local closing meeting was a great success. There were 69 participants, from several disciplines of the civil society related to VAW and girls. Summarized point of attentions and/or outputs:

- The draft of the Handbook, including aims and strategies, the process and dimensions of empowerment and the diverse trainings guidelines was also presented and explained.
- The impact of the financial crisis on VAW and evidence based advice was given and discussed, together with the cutting down of budgets in/of front-line NGOs and support services.
- A multi-sectoral approach is needed, as well as the consideration of the intersection of other factors of discrimination than gender alone, to prevent and combat VAW more effective.
- The government must take measures and make resources available, also for BMR NGOs.

## **SUMMARY. The Dutch Legislative Framework**

### **Gender Rights Under International Law**

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. The Convention defines discrimination against women as “... any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.” By accepting the Convention, States commit themselves to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms, including:



- to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women;
- to establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination; and
- to ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises.

The Convention provides the basis for realizing equality between women and men through ensuring women’s equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life — including the right to vote and to stand for election — as well as education, health and employment. States parties agree to take all appropriate measures, including legislation and temporary special measures, so that women can enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Convention is the only human rights treaty which affirms the reproductive rights of women and targets culture and tradition as influential forces shaping gender roles and family relations. It affirms women’s rights to acquire, change or retain their nationality and the nationality of their children. States parties also agree to take appropriate measures against all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of women. Countries that have ratified or acceded to the Convention are legally bound to put its provisions into practice. They are also committed to submit national reports, at least every four years, on measures they have taken to comply with their treaty obligations.

### **Gender Rights Under Domestic Dutch Law**

Article 1 of the Constitution forbids discrimination on the basis of gender. Gender equality is overseen by the Ministry for Social Affairs and Emancipation. Since 1978, the Netherlands has enacted an ‘emancipation policy’ (*emancipatiebeleid*) which strives to achieve equality and reform in issues such as parental leave; work, care and income; power and decision-making; human rights. In the Emancipation Plan for 2006-2010, the government’s goal is to “have more women work more hours, and to bring about better utilization of their talents and qualities.” Women were granted the right to vote in 1919. In 1992, the government introduced measures to try to increase the number of women in politics, influenced by EU policies on the number of women in political decision-making. This policy consisted of recommendations to political parties to increase the proportion of women candidates and MPs. There are no laws or penalties to force the political parties to increase their number of women. Despite this, the number of women in political decision-making has risen at every election. One political party in Parliament, the SGP, excludes women.

## Dutch Law and FGM

In 2003, over 20.000 girls aged between 0-16 from the ‘risk-countries’ (African countries where FGM is quite common) were living in the Netherlands. In theory, all these girls are at risk of being circumcised. No reliable figures are available on the number of girls that are actually being circumcised in the Netherlands, or the number of women/girls living in the Netherlands that have been circumcised in their home country. The government estimates that per year at least 50 girls become a victim of FGM. The Dutch health service (GGD) believes there are around 25,000 girls in the Netherlands at risk of FGM. The procedure is unnecessary, extremely painful and dangerous, say the health authorities. The trick is to bring the subject out into the open. Parents should be made to feel able to discuss why they want their daughters circumcised.

Although the Council on Health advised otherwise, the government states that specific incrimination of FGM is not necessary in order to have effective prosecution of FGM. However, there will be some changes in criminal law. It will be made possible to prosecute an inhabitant of the Netherlands who conducted a circumcision abroad. Besides that, the period in which FGM can be prosecuted will be extended. The government also does not follow the advice of the Council to examine the genitals of all girls in the Netherlands during the regular contacts with the Youth Health Services. The government intends to use the Youth Health Services more actively for prevention and early detection (by using a protocol for discussing FGM), but not by physical examination of all girls. Professionals will not be legally obliged to report signals which may point at FGM; but a code of conduct (reporting code) will be implemented countrywide. In the Netherlands although it is qualified as the criminal offence of (serious) physical abuse which carries a penalty of at least three but no more than twelve years (Articles 300-303 of the Dutch Penal Code (*Wetboek van Strafrecht*)).

The Sanders Commission, established in 2004, has been given the task of advising the Government on the policy for combating FGM. The Commission advised, among other things, that the medical and social services should have a statutory duty to report FGM to the Centre for Consult and Report Child Abuse (CCRCA) (*Advies- en Meldpunt Kindermishandeling*). It should be noted that Dutch law already provides for such a reporting possibility: youth welfare workers are already permitted to disregard professional confidentiality by virtue of Article 53 Paragraph 3 of the Youth Care Act (YCA) (*Wet op de jeugdzorg*) whenever the child’s best interest requires this. Indeed, according to Article 55 Paragraph 3 of the YCA Implementation Decree (*Uitvoeringsbesluit Wet op de jeugdzorg*), youth welfare workers have a duty to report such cases.<sup>31</sup> They report to the CCRCAs which, in turn, then have the authority to report cases to the authorities by virtue of Article 11 of the YCA.

## Forced Marriage and Dutch Law

As Jantiene Kriens (Rotterdam Executive Councillor) stated the legal ground to bring girls back to the Netherlands is the compulsory education law. Up to the age of 18, pupils are obliged to follow education. Parents have to register their children with a school and make sure they attend the school. Parents who contravene this law, by keeping their children out of school can be prosecuted. That is how Rotterdam tries to prevent forced arranged marriages. Arranged marriages are not actually banned in the Netherlands.

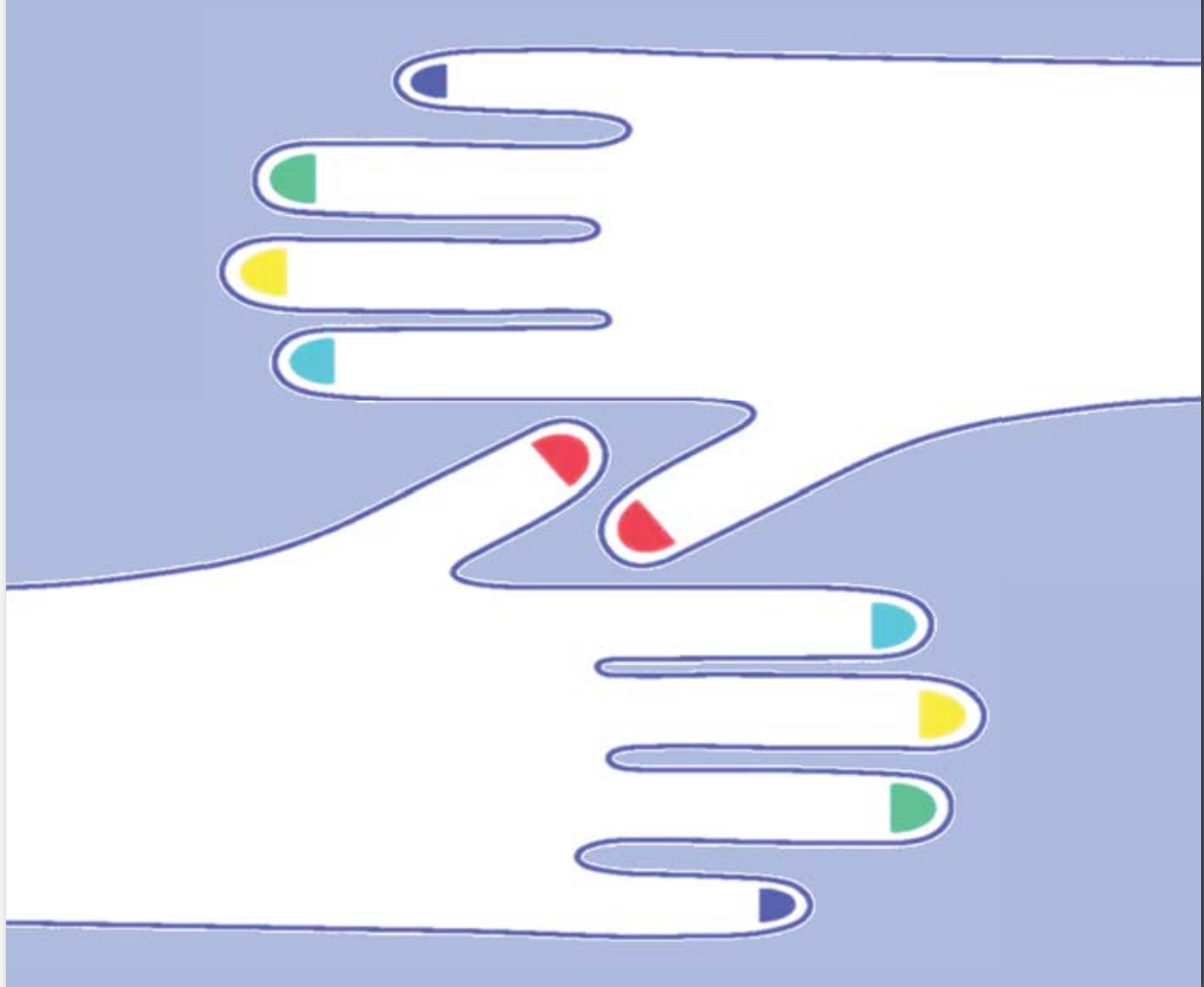
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# Lessons from Experience

## General Conclusion





## Lessons from Experience. General Conclusion

*Franca Bimbi*

The project “*SPEAK OUT! Empowering migrant, refugees and ethnic minority women against gender violence in Europe*” has been developed during a crucial period of the European Union’s crisis. The European society is facing very deep challenges concerning the perception of its identity, the perspective of its unity as a stable model and the mutual representations of the cultural convergence between the countries. We considered important to analyse the *SPEAK OUT!* results as lessons to face the challenges of the European society.

### **Lessons from the Multi-diversity of the European Universalism**

During the project, we experienced the importance to translate the meanings of the normative principles of “women’s universal human rights against gender violence” in the different meanings of the MRM women relating to their experiences of “reciprocity”, “dignity”, “respect” and “choice”. Lesson from the project suggests opening *the floor for a new European universalism and pluralism, considering deeply the recognition of differences in the framework of gender human rights.*

### **Lessons from the Increasing Voice of Migrant and Refugee Women**

The presence of a significant number of migrant women in all the countries of the European Union offers a chance to transform their specific capabilities in social everyday life bonds. *Giving voice to MRM women, particularly on VAW issues, means enlarging the public European sphere and contrasting the risks of nationalistic or communitarian closure.* Europe needs a more civil society and a friendly civil society with the differences that are part of it.

### **Lessons from the Difficulties to Give Voice to Minority Women**

During the project, we realized that the definition of “minority women” depends on the different labels assigned to some groups that are also composed by natives and “full” citizens in each country.

These groups are sometimes socially constructed by the majority as the extreme border of strangeness. The risk that, depending on the circumstances, different minorities could become specific targets of discrimination, ethnicization and racialization, is very high. The project was successful since we worked with

minorities in those areas were some internal *intermediate body operated peer-to-peer, offering symbolic resources in order to give the possibility to express their demands in their own languages.*

### **Lessons from the Work on VAW and MRM**

The project proves that the development of the MRM women's capabilities to engage VAW allows an enlargement of the European citizenship.

To be more active in the territory where they live, MRM women need to perceive themselves and to be perceived as *conscious citizens despite formal entitlements.* *The search of the grassroots capability for an active citizenship* in each group of the European society could be considered as one of the most important dynamics for social cohesion.

### **Lessons from the Methods of Self-Empowerment and Peer-to-Peer Recognition and Support**

The two most important characteristics of the MRM women's training were the self-empowerment and the peer-to-peer recognition and support. The attendances of the project symbolically represent a double face of the MRM women situation in the European society facing VAW. They are at the same time *outsider* in the full citizenship, but *within* some important aspects of the substantial European citizenship, without voice and consciousness of their rights, but equally weak as victims of violence. The project built a micro-context where asymmetries between women could be symbolically overcome and gender inequality deeply questioned.

In this space of potentially multilayered citizenship, MRM women represented the possibilities to play their role as European citizens and to give birth to their own initiatives. The broadening of social networks against violence and the increasing density of the societal bonds between the multiple differences is a perspective for a new edition of the "citizens' Europe".



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### Department of Sociology, University of Padua (Italy)

In January 2012 the Department has changed its name into FISPPA – Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Education and Applied Psychology. One of the first Italian University Department, it has been doing research and publication on feminist studies, women's health and body issues and violence against women since 1977.

**Franca Bimbi**, the coordinator of *SPEAK OUT!* project, is among the relevant promoter of gender studies in Italy. She is Senior Full Professor of Sociology. She was Director of the Ph.D. School in Social Sciences. She is a member of the Administrative Council of the University. She is in the board of the Interdepartmental Centre for Research and Studies on Gender (CIRSG). She is in charge of the research group on “Gender, Citizenship, Identities’ Pluralism”. Since 1996, she has been in charge of Venice anti-violence Center and responsible for National research projects on VAW.

Among her latest publications: (2012), *Genere. Dagli studi delle donne a un'epistemologia femminista tra dominio e libertà*, in «About Gender. International Journal of Gender Studies», vol. 1, n. 1, pp. 52-93; (2010), *Violenza contro le donne. Formazione di genere e migrazioni globalizzate* (editor, with A. Basaglia), Guerini Studio, Milano; (2009), *Parola chiave “Genere. Donna/donne”. Un approccio eurocentrico e transculturale*, in «La Rivista delle Politiche Sociali- Italian Journal of Social Policy», n. 2, pp. 261-297.

### Franca and Franco Basaglia Foundation (Italy)

The Foundation is a non-profit organization recognized by the Ministry of Interior. Its headquarter is based in Venice, isle of San Servolo. It was created to keep alive the lesson of Franco Basaglia and Franca Ongaro Basaglia on the international movement of criticism of psychiatry and institutions. The Foundation hosts the Basaglia Archive which catalogs and computerizes heritage of writings by Franca and Franco Basaglia and material on topics related to their work and commitment.

**Alberta Basaglia**, Vice-President of Franca and Franco Basaglia Foundation, coordinated the activities of the Foundation in the *SPEAK OUT!* project. At the Municipality of Venice, she is in charge of the Office for Youth Participation and Culture of Peace, and the Observatory on Differences and

Sexual Orientation. She has a wide working experience on gender issues in various areas; she collaborates with institutions such as the University of Padua and the Department for Equal Opportunity and Rights of the Italian Government.

Among her latest publications: (2010), *Violenza contro le donne. Formazione di genere e migrazioni globalizzate* (editor, with F. Bimbi), Guerini Studio, Milano; (2006) (editor, with *aliae*), *Il silenzio e le parole*, Franco Angeli, Milano; (2000) (editor, with *aliae*), *Libertà femminile e violenza sulle donne*, Franco Angeli, Milano.

### **Municipality of Padua (Italy)**

The project *Unit for Welcoming and Immigration*, as directly involved in the *SPEAK OUT!* project, makes, *inter alia*, networking between different public and private providers of different services for migrant people and especially for migrant women, as temporary housing reception, counseling for rights and duties for women as family assistants, vocational guidance and support in the job search, legal and psychological advice for foreign women. It also works for the mediation of conflicts in districts through intercultural facilitators. It promotes intercultural initiatives to foster dialogue among different cultures and supports the activity of the Council for foreign citizens.

**Antonella Ferrandino** – Senior executive and Head of the project *Unit for Welcoming and Immigration* – coordinates the networking for migrants and refugees and anti-violence initiatives. She coordinated the involvement of the Municipality of Padua in the *SPEAK OUT!* project's activities.

### **Interdepartmental Centre for Research and Studies on Gender (CIRSG), University of Padua (Italy)**

The Centre has been established in 2008 and is one of the most important Centre for gender studies in Italy in the fields of history, economics, politics, law, and social sciences.

**Alisa Del Re** – Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Padua – is the Director of CIRSPG. She was the coordinator of the involvement of the Centre in *SPEAK OUT!* project. Her main field of research is the political representation of women. She has directed four editions of the course “Women, Politics and Institutions” which was co-funded by the Italian Ministry of Equal Opportunities and the University of Padua.

Among her latest publications: (2011) (editor), *Donne Politica Utopia*, Il Poligrafo, Padova; (2010) (with L. Perini and V. Longo), *I confini della cittadinanza. Genere, partecipazione politica e vita quotidiana*, Franco Angeli, Milano; (2009) (with L. Perini), *Politiche di Pari Opportunità*, Cleup, Padova.

## **SURT Foundation (Barcelona, Spain)**

SURT is a women's foundation established in 1993 which works for the recognition of the rights of women and the introduction of the gender perspective in the public arena. SURT carries out work in different areas, such as career guidance and counseling, integration of women into the labour market, intercultural community intervention, consultancy, and research. In 2011, 1,578 women contacted SURT and 1,108 participated in specific programmes; 57,6% of those were born outside Spain.

The Foundation has a wide experience in both anti-violence issues and programmes targeted for migrant women from a gender and intercultural perspective. Since 2005, it has been managing a specific anti-violence service addressed to all women who contact the organization. SURT has also provided training courses to VAW and migration professionals on addressing violence against women from a gender and intercultural perspective.

SURT has carried out research projects at EU level on violence against women, especially under the Daphne Programme, focused on gender violence effects (GVEI), violence against female prison inmates (ALTRA, SPREAD) and Roma women (EMPOW-AIR). It is also currently carrying out research under the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme on the recognition and development of migrant women's competences (FORWARD).

**Mar Camarasa** and **Laura Sales** coordinated the activities of SURT in the *SPEAK OUT!* project.

## **CEPAIM Foundation (Madrid, Spain)**

CEPAIM Foundation is a non-profit organization established in 1994 in Spain, in 10 Autonomous Communities (18 cities). This organization focuses its activities on the study of the migratory process and the promotion of immigrants' social and economic integration, using an intercultural approach.

CEPAIM has seven work areas or programs: Reception and Housing; Development Cooperation; Community Activation; Diversity Management (DMP); Equality between Women and Men; Social and Labour Inclusion and Families Support. It currently employs a team of 168 people.

In some way CEPAIM has stemmed from Community Initiatives. The Equality between Women and Men Program arose, with own identity, from the Equal Initiative. This initiative helped the organization to take into account the differentiated aspects of female migration processes, setting up specialized devices to deal with gender-related migrations (coaching workshops on employment opportunities, interaction spaces) and to respond to situations that particularly affect female immigrants. The field of gender-based violence is one in which CEPAIM has been investigating, designing agreement in order to deal adequately when gender-based violence cases are detected. The Foundation is currently developing a project on FGM in Senegal.

Its usual financial sources are public funds of the Spanish central Government and Autonomous Communities and private funds as well as European funds (NEXOS, Strategies against racism and xenophobia, EQUAL Initiative 2002-2004; BEMBEA, Strategies against racism and xenophobia, EQUAL Initiative 2005-2007).

**Bakea Alonso I Casals** was the coordinator of CEPAIM in the *SPEAK OUT!* project.

### **Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki (Finland)**

The University of Helsinki is a public research and educational organisation, ranked among the world's one hundred best universities; it has 11 faculties and 17 independent institutes. The Aleksanteri Institute – Finnish Centre for Russian and Eastern European Studies is one of these independent institutes. Research and development work around gender violence has been on its agenda since early 2000s and is now included to research topics of its Centre of Excellence on choices of Russia's modernisation.

**Aino Saarinen** (D.Soc.Sc) – the coordinator of the Aleksanteri Institute for the *SPEAK OUT!* project – is Senior Fellow (Emerita) and Aleksanteri Associate (2013-2015) at Aleksanteri Institute, and Adjunct Professor at Tampere University and Oulu University. She is also a member of the Institute's Centre of Excellence on Choices of Russia's Modernization. In the early 1990s, she was involved in starting the Nordic-Northwest Russian "Femina Borealis" network. From the late 1990s until the early 2000s, she worked as Head of Research at the Nordic Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Research in Oslo and was Nordic Visiting Professor at Nevsky Institute in St. Petersburg. She has led Nordic-Russian and international networks and development and research projects on the Barents Region, Russian women and migrant women.

She has published on feminist theories, mobilisation against gender violence, organising in transnational settings and migration in «Acta Sociologica», «Nais-tutkimus/Kvinnoforskning», «Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift», «Signs», and «Communist and Post-communist Studies». She has co-edited a few Nordic and Nordic-NW Russian anthologies, such as *Gazing at Welfare, Gender and Agency in Post-socialist Countries* (with M. Jäppinen and M. Kulmala, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011); *Builders of a "New Europe". Women Migrants from the Eastern Transregions* (with M. Calloni, Kikimora Publications, 2012); *Women and Transformation in Russia* (with K. Ekonen and V. Uspenskaia), forthcoming from Routledge, 2013.

### **Multicultural Resource Center MONIKA (Finland)**

The Center was established in 1998. It is a national resource center of professional know-how offering easy access services, support and peer group activities of immigrant women and children who have suffered violence. It develops and

supports the empowerment of multicultural organizations, offers education to recognize and prevent violence against immigrant women and children and helps victims. It is also a member of The Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (ETNO), set by Ministry of Interior.

The amount of the clients has increased constantly in the last ten years, from 26 in 2001 to 684 in 2011. In 2011 the Center had clients from more than 40 different countries. Most of them were from Russia and Eastern Europe. Comparing to the year 2010, the amount of Asian clients increased dramatically. Mental, verbal, physical, economic violence and divorce issues were the most common contact reasons in 2011.-

**Jenni Tuominen** and **Jekaterina Tantt** coordinated the activities of MONIKA in the *SPEAK OUT!* project.

### **TIYE International (Netherlands)**

TIYE is the umbrella NGO of 21 National organisations of black, migrant and refugee (BRM) people in the Netherlands. It was established officially in 1994. Since 1998, TIYE has been enjoying Special Consultative Status with the ECOSOC of the United Nations.

TIYE is closely involved in different UN bodies such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and was involved in some preparatory processes as well as UN World Conferences (such as the Women's World Conference in Beijing and the Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance Conference in Durban).

Its objectives are: the promotion of real equal opportunities for effective participation of black and migrant women; the promotion of BMR women's human rights and worldwide solidarity between men and women; to combat violence against women and children; to improve and enhance an effective role for BMR women in social and economic participation; to combat racism and all other forms of discrimination; to combat social and economic exclusion of BMR women.

On these issues, TIYE has promoted and carried out EU projects especially under the Daphne Programme; one of these projects (*Break Through*) was selected as one of the 15 good practices by the European Commission.

In the *SPEAK OUT!* project, TIYE was coordinated by **Hellen Felter**.





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