

VAW: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN SPAIN

VAW: CONTEXT ANALYSIS OUR EXPERIENCE IN BREAKING THE SILENCE

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VAW in Spain (Context Analysis)

Women's silence

The European Institute for Gender Equality reports that in Spain, 22 % of women experienced physical and/or sexual violence at least once since the age of 15 and although this seems to be lower than the EU-28 average of 33 %, 19 % of women who experienced physical or sexual violence by any perpetrator in the previous 12 months had not told anyone which is above the EU-28 average of 13 % and reveals the low reporting problem related to gender based violence.

50% of Spanish women have experienced sexual harassment by any perpetrator and, according to Eurostat, a high rate of 0,29 women victims of intentional homicide per 100 000 inhabitants was detected.

Women's safety

The situation of human rights is especially worrying when it comes to women. Some of the main problems that they face in the Spanish context are the following:

- * The restructuring of the States' national machinery for the advancement of women. The elimination of the Ministry of Gender Equality, for example, have affected the ability of the State to ensure the development and effective implementation of gender policies and dilutes the focus on gender as a cross cutting element.
- * The absence of a consistent gender equality strategy at the national level. The institutionalization and co-ordination between the Autonomous Communities and the Central Administration is weak. There has been a reduction of the competencies on gender equality and gender-based violence of local authorities since 2013.
- * The austerity measures introduced in response to the economic and financial crisis have had a severe and disproportionate impact on women, in particular women with disabilities, older women and women domestic workers. Women have faced unemployment, cuts and reductions in social security and dependent care, wage freezes, transformation of full-time into part-time jobs with overtime hours.
- * The prevalence of violence against women, including sexual violence. The high percentage of women who have died as a result of a gender-based violence in close relationships (48 women in 2017) despite of the existence of a specific law prohibiting violence against women (Organic Law 1/2004) and the signed of a State Pact (2017).

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- * The deterioration of protective services for women victims of gender violence in different Autonomous Communities, including the limited availability of shelters for women.
- * The persistence of entrenched traditional attitudes and stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society. Such stereotypes are also root causes of violence against women.
- * The lack of positive media portrayals and images of ethnic minority women, Roma women, migrant women and women with disabilities.
- * The lack of a mandatory comprehensive schools age appropriate to receive education on sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- * The lack of measures to eliminate stereotypes in the education system. The school curricula and textbook have not been revised.
- * The low level of school attendance and the high dropout rate among Roma girls.
- * The prevalence of trafficking in women and girls and at the absence of comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation, as well as the Government failure to criminalize all forms of trafficking.
- * The inadequate prosecution of the exploitation of prostitution.
- * The budget cuts and other legislative reforms which undermine the progress of various legislative and other measures to improve the situation of disadvantaged groups of women, especially migrant women, Roma women, older women and women with disabilities.
- * The practice of expulsion of persons, including women and girls, crossing the border at Ceuta and Melilla, with no individual gender specific evaluation of each case. All of this despite of some refugee status was granted on the ground of gender-based persecution, according to Law 12/2009 on Asylum and Subsidiary Protection.
- * The generally low participation of women in political and public life, in particular in decision-making positions at the Autonomous Communities level (four out of 17 presidents of Autonomous Communities are women), in the diplomatic service (12 out of 199 Ambassadors are women), and in the judiciary.

All these issues were already pointed and shared by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination

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Against Women in its document "Concluding observations on the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of Spain" (2015).

Women during the COVID pandemic

In Spain, the coronavirus has become one of the events with the greatest impact remembered, especially at an economic level. Production has stalled, consumption has dropped dramatically, and markets are falling to levels we haven't seen in a long time.

It has completely changed social relations and the behavior of citizens in almost all areas, and that will foreseeably change the world panorama as we know it. This is how the coronavirus is affecting and will affect the Spanish economy in 2021.

Laying the impact on the economy aside, lets focus on the subject of the project: violence. Undoubtedly, the pandemic has had an enormous effect on the Spanish society. Coronavirus and violence are two terms that already separately generate emotions such as fear. If we put them together, the combination turns very dangerous. These days of lockdown put the magnifying glass on power abuse which touches victims of all ages and backgrounds, but especially those who are for some reason unprivileged, such as young women.

The world lives confined. That means that most of us cannot leave our house or municipality if it is not for what is strictly necessary. For many people, confinement is proving difficult to fulfill due to the social (or anti-social implications in this case) that this has. However, for women who suffer gender violence, this forced confinement is a sentence. Condemned to live with their abusers, women who suffer gender violence are the great victims of this generalized situation of confinement. When there are also minors involved, the situation is even more serious, since in the same way their lives are in constant danger.

The Secretary General of the United Nations, António Guterres, has referred in one of his last interventions to gender inequality as a form of violence, which has increased even more in this pandemic. To protect women and girls from gender-based violence, which always increases in situations of conflict and insecurity, Antonio has pledged to "prevent and rectify domestic violence as part of our national and global responses."

The Spanish Ministry of Equality has released the guide "We are with you. We stop gender violence together" in order to publicize the resources available to citizens. And it is that gender violence, although it affects the woman victim of such abuse or mistreatment in the first place, also affects the rest of society. Years ago, male violence stopped being something exclusive to the private sphere and became a social scourge against which all of us must fight.

When these initial moments of overflow due to COVID-19 pass, it will be very important to continue working against gender and intra-family violence, because it is expected that the social resources for the victims will not meet the needs at a time in that the fragility and vulnerability of the weakest will be even greater.

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Our experience in Breaking the Silence

Project objectives:

The project aimed to 1) to share good practices among involved partners, 2) to learn new tools and methodologies 3) to increase awareness on VAW in our societies, and 4) to strengthen alliances at regional, national and international level with entities that are fighting to counteract gender-based violence and abuse. We wanted to expand our knowledge on VAW and learn methodologies and tools so that we are better qualified and equipped to provide education, create projects on VAW, and answer the need of violence victims when they participate in our programmes services.

Learning activities:

We had three learning activities between July 2018 and October 2019, which took place in Vinci (Italy), in Sosnowiec (Poland) then in Budapest (Hungary). During these visits, the partner organizations exchanged (shared and learned) good practices, tools already developed and used at each of the partner organizations on the issue of VAW. Also, we had field trips at various regional institutions (1/country: crisis centers, women shelters), where we had a valuable insight as to how the national/regional-level system supports victims of VAW (and victims of other crises). To ensure that project results, i.e. the new tools and methods, are communicated within the partners' community (employees, volunteers), each partner organized an internal workshop by the end of the project. In addition to the partners' capacity building, we had a dissemination plan to carry out with the twofold purpose of giving information on our project's achievement and doing awareness-raising on the issues related to VAW to the broader public through our online community platforms.

Project results:

Main methods/tools shared

Transactional Analysis

Art workshops

Tools for women's empowerment

Digital storytelling

Training on Modern Slavery

Workshop on the basics on VAW and victim-blaming by Crisis Ambulance (Hungarian Interchurch Aid)

Training on teaching teenagers about healthy/unhealthy relationship

Field trips

Each partner organised a field trip to crisis centres, women shelters during the LTTAs. Due to the field trips to the various institutions during the LTTAs, we learnt about the system, social network, and also the deficiencies of these institutions in helping victims in times of all kinds of crisis. This knowledge serves us to better design new project applications and to better understand the needs of victims of violence. This knowledge supports us to explore better the needs and target groups for a possible project plan.

Internal workshops

All the partners organized an internal workshop (1/partner) to staff and volunteers to introduce the project results and discuss plans and possibilities for developing new projects on VAW.

The partnership also organised and shared the following activities and events:

-Researching country-specific data on VAW

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-Training tools

-Workshop on writing new projects in the field of VAW

-An expert working at the NANE, a non-profit Women's Rights Association in Hungary gave us a 2 hours long online workshop on the final project meeting.

Project resources:

Two kind or resources are available in our website (<https://www.permaculturacantabria.com/breaking-the-silence/>):

Project results:

*5 videos made by the project participants (with the digital storytelling methodology)

*1 **Presentation about Gender Based Violence in Spain (2019)** made by one of our project participants

*1 **Presentation about Project Results and Conclusions** made by the Spanish project coordinator

* This article

Useful information for women and society:

*3 dynamic info-graphics related to VAW

*Annual report on gender-based violence (Cantabria Autonomous Community, 2019), with updated information about all services available for victims of gender violence and the latest regional statistics

*Violence Against Woman (national statistics)

*Women's Centers (national information)

*Information about international gender legislation and organisations.

Project impact:

Due to the exchange of the broad range of methodologies, tools, knowledge on VAWWG, partner organisations (staff, volunteers) could significantly raise the level of their services: they implemented new practices, tools in their services, they developed/improved their methodologies, approaches with the broadened horizon and knowledge gained on VAW, they had the knowledge needed to approach those victims better potentially involved in our programmes, trainings, activities, and partners could improve their skills to carry out awareness-raising campaigns and spreading news related to VAW. On a local level, other organisations, professionals acted as multipliers of the project goals. They were involved in the project activities, either they learned tools, practices or provided workshops. Based on this project's experience, partners have started to initiate and implement new projects in the field of VAW to improve their capacities and equipment further to fight against VAW.