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## Prevention of and counteraction to domestic violence on the example of the activity of the public organisation 'Women's perspectives' Centre

### Abstract:

Nowadays, in Ukraine, the integral system of the prevention of domestic violence and supporting families affected by violence is a practically absent. Active work within the framework of prevention and correction of the results of violence is done by social organisations. One of them is the West-Ukrainian centre 'Women's perspectives'. Due to the activity of this organisation, a lot of analytical studies, concerning this problem are conducted. With the aim of the prevention and combating violence, they conduct a lot of training programmes, educational workshops, professional consultations, conferences, seminars, represent victims in court, and provide them with material help.

**Key words:** domestic violence, prevention of violence, social organisation 'Women's perspectives', socio-psychological services

Zapobieganie i przeciwdziałanie przemocy domowej na przykładzie działalności organizacji pozarządowej Centrum „Kobiece perspektywy”

### Abstrakt:

Obecnie na Ukrainie w praktyce nie funkcjonuje zintegrowany system zapobiegania przemocy w rodzinie i wspierania rodzin dotkniętych przemocą. Aktywną działalność w zakresie przeciwdziałania i zapobiegania skutkom przemocy rozwijają

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organizacje społeczne. Jedną z nich jest centrum „Zhinochi perspektywy” („Kobiece perspektywy”). Dzięki działalności tej organizacji przeprowadzono badania analityczne dotyczące problemów przemocy, mające na celu zapobieganie i eliminowanie jej skutków, poprzez prowadzenie programów treningowych, warsztatów edukacyjnych, konsultacji specjalistów, konferencji, seminariów, reprezentowanie ofiar przemocy w sądach, udzielanie wsparcia materialnego poszkodowanym.

**Słowa kluczowe:** przemoc w rodzinie, zapobieganie przemocy, organizacja społeczna „Zhinochi perspektywy” („Kobiece perspektywy”), wsparcie socjalne i psychologiczne

### Introduction

Toleration to violence in the Ukrainian society, which is caused mostly by mental peculiarities and cultural traditions, is increasing under modern conditions due to the crisis processes in the economic, political, and social spheres. Therefore, the purposeful activity, focused on overcoming and prevention of domestic violence, is becoming more and more important, acquiring more topicality and dimensions.

Prevention of and counteraction to domestic violence is a system of social and special measures directed to the removal of reasons and conditions which cause the occurrence of domestic violence; stopping domestic violence which is being prepared or has already begun; conducting corrective programmes or calling to account people who have committed domestic violence, and rehabilitation of people who have suffered from domestic violence<sup>2</sup>. Nowadays, the integral system of the prevention of violence in a family and accompanying families which have suffered from violence is practically absent in Ukraine. Victims of violence are not well-informed about their rights and duties which, to some extent, cause violence to them, though it does not release them from responsibility for its results.

Due to the results of social studies, it is established that most people suffer from violence from their father or husband, more seldom from their mother, and most rarely from wife. Thus, women have faced domestic violence more often (33% of women in comparison with 23% of men). The number of violence in a family against minors is increasing every year, moreover, 100% of children under 15 years old suffer, and 62.2% at the

<sup>2</sup> О. Бандурка, *Моніторинг стану виконання законодавства України щодо протидії насильству в сім'ї, 2001-2011 роки*, (ed.) О.М. Бандурка, К.Б. Левченко, Комітет Верховної Ради України з питань прав людини, національних меншин та міжнародних відносин, Київ-Харків 2011, p. 20.



age from 15 to 20 years old -Consequently, women and children are the most distinctive categories which suffer from violence<sup>3</sup>.

The work concerning prevention of domestic violence in Ukraine was and is conducted by:

- criminal police;
- social services for a family and youth;
- crisis centres;
- an American project 'Harmony' which conducts educational seminars for workers of social spheres and power structures of this problem;
- international 'Consolation' humanities centre which holds seminars for psychologists and social teachers, publishes and circulates booklets and brochures on the rights of children and members of a family (with the aim to inform kids and their parents), it also conducts psychological consultations<sup>4</sup>;
- different public organisations.

In the sphere of state social politics, the struggle with violence is determined by the Law of Ukraine concerning domestic violence prevention, which came into force in 2001. It is based on the world-wide experience of solving this problem. According to this law, domestic violence are any intentional actions of physical, sexual, psychological or economic type of one member of a family against another family member, when these actions break the constitutional rights and freedom of one family member as a person and a citizen, doing him or her moral harm and harm to his or her physical or psychological health<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, violence is a result of conscious actions of people and is characterised by the following main features: premeditation, doing harm, breaking rights and freedom of an individual, considerable prevalence of force (physical, psychological, related to a higher rank, etc.) of those who turn to violence<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Т. Проненко, *Затобігання насильству в сім'ї: методичний посібник для працівників міліції*, Міністерство внутрішніх справ України, Київ 2011, р. 27.

<sup>4</sup> О. Луценко, *Насильство у соціокультурному вимірі сьогочасності: стан, причини та механізми подолання*, Міністерство освіти і науки України, Суми 2016, р. 104.

<sup>5</sup> В. Брижик, *Інформаційно-методичні матеріали та аналіз нормативно-правової бази з питань попередження насильства над дітьми в сім'ї та поза нею*, (ed.) Т.В. Журавель, Г.О. Христової, Всеукраїнський громадський центр "Волонтер", Представництво дитячого фонду ООН (ЮНІСЕФ) в Україні, Київ 2010, р. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Г.В. Федькович, Х.І. Кіт, М.С. Чумало, *Насильство в сім'ї: можливості вирішення проблеми*, Львів 2015, р. 2.

A number of special measures for preventing domestic violence are foreseen by the Law mentioned above. Those measures are as follows: a formal warning about the inadmissibility of committing domestic violence; instituting and striking off the prophylactic register of family members who have committed domestic violence; protective instructions; the duty to learn a correctional programme<sup>7</sup>. The correctional programme is worked out for people who have resorted to violence and it is a complex of social services which are directed to the formation of the experience of non-violent behaviour and humanistic values; it is based on the responsibility for one's own behaviour and it results in the realisation by the person who has turned to violence and his or her family members that violence is breaking human rights; a necessity to form a new model of family life on the basis of gender equality and following the rights of family members<sup>8</sup>. However, it is worth pointing out that this direction of social-correctional work is not well developed in Ukraine. State correctional programmes are absent nowadays, proper legal mechanisms of influencing an aggressor and calling him/her to account are not worked out.

The experience of struggle with domestic violence and its prevention is reflected in the range of legal acts and social programmes. The realisation of the "Programme of infringement prevention" (2001-2005) and the "Complex programme of infringements prevention" (in the years 2007-2009) helped, to some extent, to improve the system of infringement prevention and to make the state of law and order better<sup>9</sup>. According to the Order of Cabinet, (from September 29, 2010), the conception of the State programme of infringement prevention for the period towards the year 2015 was approved. The plan of measures which included conducting the national campaign 'Stop violence!' for the period towards the year 2015 was focused on the wide prophylactic work concerning prevention of domestic violence, the victims of which are mostly women and children<sup>10</sup>.

Considering the ascertained measures, it may be assumed that state activity in the sphere of prevention of violence has a systematic character and necessary resources for effective activity. However, the opposite situation

<sup>7</sup> В. Брижик, *Інформаційно-методичні матеріали та аналіз нормативно-правової бази з питань попередження насильства над дітьми в сім'ї та поза нею*, (ed.) Т.В. Журавель, Г.О. Христової, Всеукраїнський громадський центр "Волонтер", Представництво дитячого фонду ООН (ЮНІСЕФ) в Україні, Київ 2010, p. 10.

<sup>8</sup> О. Бантурка, *Соціальна і корекційна робота з особами, які вчинили насильство в сім'ї*, (ed.) О.М. Бантурка, К.Б. Левченко, І.М. Трубавіної, Міжнародний жіночий правозахисний центр "Ла Страда-Україна", Київ-Харків 2013, p. 79.

<sup>9</sup> О. Луцезко, *Насильство у соціокультурному вимірі сьогочасності: стат, причини та механізми подолання*, Міністерство освіти і науки України, Суми 2016, p. 109.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 110.



is seen in practice. Most of legal lawmaking acts need a range of documents which could give a possibility to put them in practice. Low level of trust to these institutions shows drawbacks in the activity of state institutions. The trust is becoming the index which conditions the frequency of turning to them and shows the level of their efficiency and effectiveness.

Because of the factors mentioned above and due to the low level of trust to the authorities and state bodies in Ukraine, their corruptibility, absence of proper financing, public organisations have to provide the market of social services. Among different social problems which must be solved by public organisations, the problem of violence is in the first place.

One of the organisations which have a positive experience in the sphere of work with the prevention and overcoming of violence, is the 'Women's perspectives' Centre. It was founded in October 1997. Its aim was: to provide gender equality in all spheres of life, protection of women's rights, attraction of public attention to the problems of women, and uniting efforts for their overcoming.

Among the main tasks of the organisation's activity, efficient attention was paid to the problem of violence. The tasks of the centre provide for:

- protection of women's rights;
- increasing law awareness and access to justice;
- contribution to gender equality;
- increasing women's competitiveness on the labour market;
- social support for women in crisis situations (domestic violence and human trafficking)

The basis for the development of the centre's work for violence prevention were the conclusions from special research whose aim was to verify the quality of work of state institutions in this sphere. The results of the study showed the imperfection of the system of state services, particularly of the police, and in the sphere of work with victims of violence. Among 164 clients of the centre who personally applied for help in the problem of violence, 80.8% of the victims had problems with communication with divisional inspectors of the police. The most typical problems they faced were: indifference (73.8%), caddishness (35.7%), accusing of provoking the violence (16.7%)<sup>11</sup>. The workers of the 'Women's perspectives' centre also established that 78% of women at first had applied

<sup>11</sup> І. Трохан, Г. Фелькович, М. Чумало, *Подолання насильства в сім'ї: український та міжнародний досвід*, Львів 2007, р. 7.

to different people before they asked for help in a public organisation. At the beginning, they turned to close people: relatives (25%), acquaintances and friends (26.6%), neighbours (18.8%)<sup>12</sup>. Quite often, women did not turn to the police because they did not believe that that could solve the problem. Victims do not turn to other state organs or public organisations because they do not know that these institutions may help in dealing with the overcoming violence<sup>13</sup>.

International research also confirms the tendency mentioned above: a woman generally asks for help very rarely after the first case of domestic violence, the more so to state organs. On average, a woman goes through 20 cases of domestic violence before she asks for help. And when she finally asks, the woman faces the problems of indifference, cruelty and caddishness from the officials, she often starts to think that violence against her is a norm, and that the attempts to protect herself will not have any results in the future. Domestic violence will continue to exist if women and children do not have proper support and protection<sup>14</sup>.

Therefore, an immediate task in the area of violence prevention is the creation of the atmosphere of non-acceptance and condemn for violent behaviour in the society. Particularly such non-acceptance is important in the case of workers of law enforcing bodies and other state organs. Their 'indulgent' treatment of domestic violence ascertains a woman that no one will help her.

Again, taking into account the level of trust to state organs and public institutions, it may be stated and foreseen that there will be more demand for the services of non-governmental organisations. Victim helplines, trainings and shelters of public organisations will build more trust in victims of violence, since they, being in stress, desire confidentiality concerning sensitive information, delicacy and tolerance while providing them with social and psychological services. Not overloaded with formalities, more flexible in their forms and methods of giving help, public organisations will be serious competitors for state bodies on the market of social services.

Nevertheless, considering the significant potential of the abilities of state bodies in the prevention of domestic violence, the 'Women's perspectives' Centre tries to adjust the effective partnership with the state bodies and law enforcing officials with the aim of working out mechanisms

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, p. 18.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, p. 20.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, p. 7.



of interaction of divisional inspectors with the representatives of social organs and other state and non-state organisations.

Thus, since October 2006 till December 2007, the 'Women's perspectives' Centre, within the framework of the implementation of the project entitled 'Learning and adopting international standards of human rights in overcoming the problem of domestic violence in Ukraine', holds 34 trainings for students of secondary school, technical colleges, colleges, with the aim of teaching preventive measures and no permission for domestic violence. During the training programmes, the youth were acquainted with the forms of violence (psychological, physical, economic, sexual), posttraumatic states of victims of violence, with the methods of violence prevention in a family and with the possible ways of help for victims of domestic violence<sup>15</sup>. At the end of the training, the students were asked some questions to find out more about violence as a phenomenon. The analysis of the survey showed that:

- every fourth woman who has school-age children in Lviv region suffers from domestic violence;
- 43% of children suffer from psychological violence in a family;
- every fifth child at the age of 13-18 suffer from physical violence in a family;
- in the families where a child suffers from domestic violence, father turns to violence against mother three times more often than in the families where children do not suffer from domestic violence.
- violence takes place in families with various financial status;
- cases of violence happen more often along with an increase in the number of children in a family;
- women and girls suffer from domestic violence more often than men and boys;
- women also commit domestic violence. Quite often it is psychological violence, while men often commit physical and psychological violence<sup>16</sup>.

Urban and rural inhabitants treat violence in different ways. Rural population tolerates violent actions more than urban population. Taking into account this feature and the low level of rural women's knowledge about possible legal mechanisms of their rights, specialists of the 'Women's

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem, p. 34.



'perspectives' Centre have organised explanatory and educational work in rural locations. They go to villages of the region and hold trainings, the topic of which is 'Adjusting correlation of all related structures of foreseeing and prevention of domestic violence in rural location'. The heads of the villages, divisional instructors of the police, their public assistants and representatives of social services - all of them take part in the trainings.

Doing a systematic work in the area of acquiring knowledge about the problems of domestic violence in the Ukrainian society, the Centre workers paid attention to the peculiarities of the perception and interpretation of violence in court practice. The research into these peculiarities was done within the framework of the project entitled 'Providing the principle of gender equability and non-discrimination during commitment of justice in Ukraine', which was supported by the Project of the American Agency of International development (USAID) 'Fair justice' in 2016. It was established by the Centre workers that in courts in Ukraine justify their decisions based on the stereotypes existing in the society concerning the acceptance of and tolerance for domestic violence against women. The most typical gender roles and stereotypes are: a woman provokes violence herself, 'the blame is on her', 'she must stand it', the satisfaction of husband's sexual desires is wife's a duty, the upbringing of children and doing household chores are a woman's duty, for a husband it is enough to provide maintenance in the minimal amount. Stereotypes in court decisions are as follows:

- 'conflict' instead of violence;
- ignoring of evidence of domestic violence and explanations of victims;
- prejudiced treatment of victims by the court and connivance for the violator;
- decreasing the amount of moral harm done in a crime<sup>17</sup>.

Extensive activities focused on overcoming and prevention of violence against women were conducted by the 'Women's perspectives' Centre within the framework of the grant of The Sigrid Rausing Trust. The period of the project implementation was from February 2015 till December 2018. Thanks to the support of The Sigrid Rausing Trust, the following activities are planned to be done:

<sup>17</sup> Звіт громадської організації „Жіночі перспективи про проведений аналіз судових рішень стосовно переходу з жінки зустрічаються жінки у доступі до правосуддя та проблема застосування міжнародного законодавства, судової практики Європейського суду з прав людини та норм антидискримінаційного законодавства України. Проект забезпечення принципу гендерної рівності та недискримінації при здійсненні правосуддя в Україні, Львів 2016, р. 33.

- legal and psychological services for women - victims suffering from domestic violence and other forms of violence and discrimination;
- legal and psychological services for women - members of families of the servicemen who took part in ATO, because of the increasing number of cases of aggression and violence in family;
- consulting, groups of mutual aid, etc.
- strategic judicial cases, connected with violence against women, including women of other regions of Ukraine
- school of protection of women's rights and strategic legal proceedings for lawyers and human rights activists who work in the sphere of women's rights protection;
- feminist informative platform, oriented at making on-line services for women and women's rights activists better, as well as making access related to justice and the protection of rights better for women;
- education and an increase in informing about gender-caused violence (domestic violence, sexual violence) among children and the youth of Lviv educational institutions (schools and colleges);
- training programmes and seminars;
- taking into account the principles of gender equality and women's rights in the practice of 'non-gender public organisations'<sup>18</sup>.

One more important branch of the centre's activity in the determined direction is the work of the contribution to the ratification of the Convention of the Council of Europe concerning the prevention of domestic violence against women and combating these phenomena, due to the support of the Council of Europe, which took part in May-July 2016.

The project aimed at increasing the level of knowledge of entities responsible for the prevention of domestic violence against women, with Istanbul Convention and with suggested changes in national lawmaking due to the results of its ratification, as well as at informing people about Istanbul Convention and the necessity of its ratification.

<sup>18</sup> Громадська Організація „Центр «Жіночі перспективи» <http://women.lviv.ua/project.html?lang=uk>.



Within the framework of the project, a lot of round tables were organised, the subject of which was: 'Introduction of the mechanisms of work with women suffering from violence, provided for by Istanbul Convention in the national lawmaking'. 6 round tables were held in Lviv, Uzhhorod, Rivne, Kherson, Vinnytsia, Chernihiv. The participants of the round tables were representatives of regional state administrations, particularly the Department of Social Protection of Population, services in cases of children's protection, social services centres for families, youth and children, as well as regional departments of National Police, deputies, representatives of human rights organisations, and mass media.

During the round tables, the following questions were discussed:

- 1) Istanbul Convention: sphere of activity, possibilities and necessary lawmaking changes.
- 2) Discussing of the project of the Law of Ukraine 'On the prevention and overcoming domestic violence' and amendments to other laws due to the adoption of Istanbul Convention.
- 3) Services for women and children who became victims of domestic violence: standards of Istanbul convention.
- 4) Requirements of Istanbul Convention of the inclusion in regional programmes, of the questions of gender equability and prevention of domestic violence. Presentation of the best practices and international approaches, discussing, recommendations of editorial character and other programme documents. Press conferences and informative actions were organised in Lviv, Uzhhorod, Rivne, Kherson, Vinnytsia, Chernihiv<sup>19</sup>.

Multi-planned, systematic, highly qualified work of the workers of the public organisation 'Women's perspectives' is shown in different analytical studies, training programmes, representation in the court, educational workshops, professional consultations, conferences, seminars, material assistance. The work of the centre corresponds to the high standards of the quality of services, which is proven by the international organisation of standardisation ISO. Performing their special mission, the workers of the centre, in contrast to the specialists of state institutions, find more possibilities within the framework of resources and competent potential for qualitative provision of complex social-psychological services, choosing flexible forms and effective strategies of activity concerning prevention and overcoming violence.

<sup>19</sup> громадська організація «Центр «Жінки Перспективи» <http://women.lviv.ua/project.html?lang=uk>.

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