



What is next!?

**Following the adoption
of the Law on prevention
and protection from
violence against women
and domestic violence**

**National Network to End Violence
Against Women and Domestic Violence**

**November 2020
Skopje, N. Macedonia**

The situation in the country

➡ In North Macedonia, every third woman is a victim of domestic violence. Ministry of labor and social policy records average of 1100 new women victims of DV (1135 in 2019) while Ministry of Interior records 989 criminal offences classified as DV 2019¹. Moreover, COVID-19 crisis uncovered gaps in the protection system for women and children victims of violence, lacking structural support for survivors and timely response. Women victims were unable to report the violence they were suffering during the emergency state between March and May 2020. MLSP reported increase of 31% of new women victims from May 2020 to June 2020², when the emergency state ended.

➡ In 2020, National network conducted survey for women victims who reported the violence at the Centers for social work and received support from specialized services run by WCSOs³. According to the survey:

- 34% of the women victims were dissatisfied and 34% were little satisfied by the action that CSW undertook to protect them when they initially reported the violence.
- 60-80% satisfaction was recorded from women victims who turned to WCSOs run services for psychosocial counseling and free legal aid.
- A High 70% from the women answered they needed financial aid, but 82% responded they were not informed about financial aid available for victims of domestic violence at CSW when they reported the violence and asked for support.
- 61% responded they needed housing and had no place to go, but high 83% of them were not informed about housing possibilities in the CSW when they reported the violence and asked for support.
- 89% responded they needed psychosocial support, and 60% responded they were not offered psychosocial support by the CSW when they asked for help.
- Only 15% of the women victims own the housing they live in, while the rest live in rented apartments, with relatives and other family members, or share housing with the perpetrator because they have nowhere to go.
- 60% of the women victims are employed, 34% are unemployed.
- 70% have underaged children, and 60% are single parents (17 by law, 26 by circumstances).
- 82% of the women victims reported the violence to the police, and in 60% of the reported cases temporary protection measures were filed, and in 46% criminal proceedings were filed.

➡ The overall protection system doesn't comply with the recommendation from the Istanbul Convention, ratified by N. Macedonia in 2017. Namely there is lack of specialized services and reintegration services throughout the country. Moreover, existing specialized services are not available and accessible to women and children with disability and women from minority groups because support is provided only on Macedonian language. There are 10 counseling centers, 7 shelter center, 3 crisis centers, 8 providers of free legal aid and 3 SOS. lines. There are 3 rape referral centers,

¹ Kvina til Kvina, Women's rights in Western Balkan, 2020, http://www.glasprotivnasilstvo.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/WRWB_2020.pdf

² Ministry of labor and social policy, 2020, data available at [link](#)

³ National network to end violence against women and domestic violence: Baseline research: Existing rehabilitation and integration services provided at the local level in Republic of North Macedonia available at [link](#)

1 shelter for human trafficking victims and victims of sexual violence. There is only 1 reintegration and rehabilitation service, run by the National Network to end violence, which is a House for open housing located in Skopje, with 4 bedrooms and communal facilities, where women victims and their children can remain from 6 months to 2 years. The House provides complete housing, psychosocial support, and free legal aid, as well as mentorship, career counseling and economic empowerment to the women victims.

In total there are 35 specialized services available from which:

- managed by NGOs and funded by state institutions (MLSP and local self-government): 9
- managed by NGOs and funded by donors (local and international): 9
- managed and funded by MLSP (CSW): 17

➔ Local self-government units are mandated (within the Law for prevention, protection and combating domestic violence) to establish and finance specialized services for domestic violence victims on local level, as well to provide financial support when victims decide to leave the perpetrator. However, very few municipalities have implemented such actions. According to the baseline survey conducted by the National Network to end violence in March 2020 the findings are as follows:

- 39 municipalities on national level (from 81 in total) have annual Programs for social protection.
- 20 of these predicted some form of support for women victims of GBV and DV in the programs for social protection.
- only 8 municipalities have allocated budget funds for specialized services for women victims of GBV and DV from which 6 are in Skopje.
- only 1 municipality provide financial support for reintegration and rehabilitation service for women victims of DV (City of Skopje).
- 10 municipalities provide one-time financial aid for victims of DV.

➔ A positive step forward was made in December 2020, with the promotion of mobile app called BeSafe aimed for easy access to information and reporting of violence against women and girls. The app is fast way to report violence via red button which is connected to the National SOS line sending information about location of the victim. After receiving the location, operators on the SOS helpline are informing police about the incident. The app contains important contact from specialized services, information on different forms of violence against women, the rights of the victims in the legal system and some practical safety advice in 3 languages: Macedonian, Albanian and Roma⁴. The app is available in Google Playstore, Apple Appstore and Huawei Appstore.

➔ **New Law for preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence** was adopted by the Government of Republic of North Macedonia and enter the parliamentary procedure in November 2020. The purpose of the law is to identify all forms of violence against women and domestic violence as one of the forms in which gender-based violence against women occurs, as well as taking integral measures and activities to deal with the causes and consequences of gender-based

⁴ Ministry of labor and social policy, 2020, https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/media-centar-ns_article-bidi-bezbedna.nsp

violence. Adoption of this Law will mean improved system of support and protection of women victims of violence.

Definition of all forms of violence against women, incorporation of the due diligence principle, recognition of the differences between general and specialized services for women victims of violence are only part of the improvements that this law will impose. Reintegration of women victims of violence and domestic violence, for the first time is part of the national legislation, regulated through Program for reintegration.

➔ **Law on Social Protection**⁵ provides some forms of financial assistance to victims of DV, which are insufficient⁶ to avoid social risk, especially the risk of homelessness among women victims of domestic violence who have left the violent partner and have underaged children. Financial aid provided with this law is as follows:

- Housing allowance, applies to all persons who are at financial and housing risk, regardless of the status of victims of domestic violence;
- One-time financial aid, up to 15.000 denars (approx. 250 euros), providing emergency protection and support for victims of DV. It is not specific for women victims and it only covers DV, not all forms of violence against women;
- One-time financial aid, up to 12.000 denars (approx. 200 euros), providing health care and medical treatment for victims of DV for injuries caused by the suffered violence. It is not specific to women victims and it only covers DV, not all forms of violence against women.

According to the experience of the service providers team of the National network to end VAW and DV, these financial aids are never combined, meaning that only one type of support is approved, and usually is around the amount of 4-5000 denars (approx. 70 - 90 euros) per victim, although the maximum amount is much higher.

This law also regulates the provision of specialized services for victims of DV through CSOs, meaning the law allows CSO's to be service providers of different types of social services for vulnerable groups. However, the law calls upon standards that CSO's must fulfill to be recognized as specialized service providers and receive funding from the Ministry of labor and social policy, which standards until December 2020 were not adopted (the new Law for Social protection was adopted in May 2019).

➔ **Employment measures** include victims of domestic violence as a specific target group, but are not designed specifically for women victims, and don't apply to other forms of violence against women⁷.

⁵ Ministry of labor and social policy, Law on social protection, 2019, available at [link](#)

⁶ National network to end violence against women and domestic violence, Gender aspect and the victims of gender based and domestic violence in the Law for social protection of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2019 available at [link](#)

⁷ National network to end violence against women and domestic violence, Recommendations for improvement of the employment opportunities of women victims, 2020, available at [link](#)

Recommendations for priority steps after the adoption of the new Law for prevention and protection from violence against women and domestic violence

- 1.** Urgent development and adoption of standards for establishment and provision of specialized services for women victims of different forms of violence, including domestic violence.
- 2.** Establishment of the National coordinative body for violence against women and domestic violence that will work on preparation and adoption of the new National strategy for violence against women and domestic violence, so as development of plan for monitoring of the implementation of the new Law.
- 3.** Urgent development and adoption of the Program for reintegration with clearly marked responsibilities and financial allocations from all relevant institutions.
- 4.** Establishment of a State Fund for financial support of women victims of violence who have left the violent surroundings and are at social risk. Social risk means not only unemployment, but also the inability to meet daily needs due to insufficient income and not owning property in one's own name.
- 5.** Establishment of a State Fund for the payment of child support and taking over the obligation by the state to collect the debts from the parent who is obliged by the Court to pay alimony.
- 6.** Develop and implement employment measures tailored to the needs of women victims of domestic violence by Agency of employment of R. North Macedonia and MLSP.
- 7.** Introduction of paid leave - adaptation of the Law on labor so that victims of domestic violence will be entitled to 10 working days of paid leave. This measure will help the victims in relocation but will additionally encourage them to leave the perpetrator because their financial status related to the risk of losing their job would be minimal.
- 8.** Women victims of violence to be recognized as a particularly vulnerable category in the Law on housing, and in the Decision on distribution of social housing as well as the conditions for the use of this type of social support. This will also mean changes in the methodology for assessing to the specifics needs of women victims of violence.

Above listed alignments are only ones identified to have the biggest priority in the *first six months* after the adoption of the new Law for preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. For all other legal changes that will have to be made after the adoption of the Law, it is necessary to conduct an analysis for harmonization of the existing legislation with the new Law on preventing and protection from violence against women and domestic violence. This is necessary if the state really wants to fully implement the articles from the new law.

What should the Program for reintegration of women victims of violence include?

The proposed model for reintegration that the National Network to end violence against women and domestic violence promoted in December 2019, is on the basis on the findings from the conducted Analysis of the economic challenges that women victims of domestic violence who wants to leave the violent partner are facing. Full document can be found on the following [link](#).

Housing

Accommodation for a certain period of time, from 6 months to a maximum of 2 (two) years from the moment of leaving the violent environment, until it is fully integrated into social life. This measure is aimed exclusively at victims who are unable to provide their own home, do not have their own home, nor can they use their parents' home. The state with its mechanisms and financing of the services and services responsible for the protection of the victim would create shelters for the victims, where there is no risk to safety, for a maximum of 2 years, and depending on the economic situation of the victim, her stability, work ability and other key conditions that would be assessed through continuous psychological counseling and case management by specialized services.

Psychological counselling

Preparing the victim to face new challenges outside the violent environment, without the risk of homelessness (temporary housing provided) and in a situation of satisfied basic subsistence needs. Psychological counseling needs to be present throughout the victim's recovery period, facing new challenges arising from the new living environment, new workplace, as well as informing her of all the rights and obligations she has, in order for her readiness for a fully independent life, with complete exclusion of the risk of returning to a violent environment or falling into a new violent relationship. Changing self-image and increasing self-confidence is a key factor in preventing violence and getting out of the role of victim.

Financial assistance

In case of a realistic assessment of the financial situation of the victim, to be provided with financial assistance, compensation for basic needs of their own and of minor children, who are under her care until her permanent employment, and in accordance with her working ability and education, which would be provided as package of measures. The package of measures would include:

- Exemption from costs related to the education of children (school supplies, school supplies, attendance at teaching activities that require additional payments, etc.)
- Exemption from co-payment for institutions for preschool age, as well as other costs related to teaching in kindergarten
- Complete exemption from co-payment for health services, including procurement of medicines
- Exemption from public transport costs for her and her children (obtaining free monthly public transport tickets)
- Enabling the use of direct financial assistance from the state
- Alimony allowance for children, if there is no regularity in the payment

- Introduction of a voucher shopping system (MLSP in cooperation with civil organizations / business community to introduce a voucher system that will be used to procure food / hygiene products for victims of domestic violence. The criteria for obtaining vouchers can be further determined based on the one-time assistance, the type of accommodation (short-term or long-term) and the like.

Public education and training

In order to successfully recover and enable the victim to be economically independent, and guided by the assessment made of the existing skills and capacities of the woman, to provide public education and training, which is certainly aimed at her employment, training and economic empowerment. After performed assessment and inspection of the working ability of the victim, an individual plan would be prepared in order to provide appropriate education or training and further development in order to strengthen and become independent.

Employment assistance

Victims who, after receiving primary protection, have the opportunity to be accommodated and of course successfully integrated into daily responsibilities, to be provided with employment assistance, by developing measures and policies and records of victims for whom employment assistance would be primary, according to law , and in cooperation with the Employment Agency of RSM, and of course with the help and guidance provided by the Centers for Social Protection and civil society organizations. Namely, it is necessary for the employment support measures to be developed in a way that will be adapted to the individual needs of the victims. This means taking into account the fact that victims of domestic violence after leaving the violent environment often function as single-parent families and employment opportunities are lower, especially in situations where there is one or more minor children (preschool age).

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