

10 YEARS of trust
of help

Two part diary

Trust Line for Women and Girls



LA
STRADA
Moldova

Trust Line for Women and Girls



10 years of trust. 10 years of help.

DIARY

PA International Centre LA STRADA
Post-box 259, Chişinău, MD-2012, Republic of Moldova

Registration Certificate no 1009620003492, issued by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Moldova

Hotline service for victims of domestic violence and violence against women TRUST LINE
0 8008 8008.

Accreditation Certificate no. 0001246 from the 5th of December 2019, issued by the National Council for the accreditation of social service providers, Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection.

Content

Diary. Part I	7
Argument	8
The number of calls to the Trust Line for Women and Girls during 10 years of activity	10
"You have called the Trust Line. I am listening..."	13
The dynamics of the domestic violence phenomenon	15
Where are our beneficiaries from?	
When do they call and why then specifically?	15
When do victims of domestic violence call and why?	16
Mondays and Fridays – the days with the highest number of calls	16
Types and forms of domestic violence	18
Physical violence, combined with psychological violence	19
Psychological violence	20
Economic violence	21
Sexual Violence	22

How the phenomenon of domestic violence is understood by the community – the evolution of calls from community members over the years	24
What do these figures speak (scream!) of?	24
State response to cases of domestic violence.. . . .	27
Authorities that should intervene and the difficulties encountered	29
Protection Measures	31
The Protection Order	31
Terms of issue of the Protection Order.	32
Executing the Protection Order	33
Supervising the execution of Protection order	33
Emergency restraining order	34
The response of the law enforcement agencies	36
Apart from protection measures	36
Difficulties which refer to the Local Public administration/the social assistance system	38
Difficulties which refer to medical assistance	39
The role of the forensic evaluation	39
The role of the medical staff	39
Multidisciplinary collaboration and referral of beneficiaries	36

Diary. Part II43

Confessions from the other end of the line
0 8008 8008. 44

 Argument..44

First call. Sadly, not the only one and definitely
not the last one 45

Trust Line for Women and Girls. What it is and isn't.... 47

Campaigning means mobilisation. 50

Violence against women in the world and at home:
laws and realities 54

 A different kind of PROLOGUE54

 General Context. What is happening in the world..... ..54

 What is happening in the Republic of Moldova.... ..55

 Who is responsible..... ..57

 Specialized services for victims58

Who are the beneficiaries of the Trust Line? 59

 10 years of the Trust Line for Women and Girls in figures.. ..59

 Forms of domestic violence60

 Who is the victim of domestic violence?60

 But why do women put up with the violence and
 don't leave? 61

 What do the victims say?. 61

What do the aggressors say?	61
What do the people say?	61
What do experts and research in the field say?	62
Cyber-violence through the lens of the Trust Line	63
What happens if the husband is a foreign citizen or the beneficiaries are abroad?	64
What makes these women more vulnerable? CHILDREN.	66
Children first!	67
What does a person who suffered from sexual abuse feel?	68
The abuse	69
The response of the justice system	69
The impact of the abuse and how is the life of the victim after the abuse	69
...as HUMAN BEINGS	72
END OF DIARY	75
WHAT DO WE WANT?	76

Diary.

Part I

Argument

In the 10 years of activity of the Trust Line for Women and Girls we have gained an experience that we would like to share with all those who want to hear it, all those who can take action.

In this decade we have also gained 18683 people, who have shared with us their fears and despair, whispers, screams and worries and they've put their trust in us, they trusted that we can help. We have worked and we have learned so that we can work better to counsel, provide information, refer to a specialist and find the right solution to each individual person. Girls and women, boys and men. But in the great majority – women, because 8 out of 10 calls received were from women.

In many cases it was probably the last hope of the person calling. And we believe we haven't let them down, but on the opposite, we responded to their need with responsibility and passion.

This is why this diary isn't so much about us and our work, but rather about the voices whose faces remained hidden, but who have been listened and helped to be heard. Beyond the numbers in the first part of the Diary are the confessions and destinies from the second part of the diary.

You will see that in many ways – in real life and in this diary – we are much alike to the women who have rung the Trust Line. Not always positive. Because there are so many dramatic situations concerning domestic violence that they seem to never end, and the changes for the better on the systematic level are not enough to get rid of the scepticism. But we are always optimistic.

This faith in what's to come is highly influenced by the number of people who have rung the Trust Line during this decade:

- 18683 people in 10 years.*
- On average, 1868 every year.*
- 156 every month.*
- 5 every day!*

A pace we have kept up for a decade. A decade in which we have helped 8541 women and children. This is the total number of people who have been assisted by the Trust Line in 10 years. 8541 human destinies changed for the better.

This is a diary of the trust that the women in despair have shared with us and of the help that we have sought and offered.

We would like to make a note before we start telling the story of this decade. The figures registered are not about how big or small, visible or hidden the phenomenon of violence is. The figures talk about all the dramatic moments in which someone – a woman – has had the courage to ask for help, the courage to pick up the phone and confess her troubles, and us who gave her a helping hand.

The number of calls to the Trust Line for Women and Girls during 10 years of activity

The minimum and maximum number of calls. Why are there discrepancies between years and what is the determinant factor in the increase and decrease of the annual number of calls received by the Trustline for Women and Girls?

During the 10 uninterrupted years of activity of the Trust Line for Women and Girls managed by 'La Strada', the consultants have received and offered counselling to **18683** people in the Republic of Moldova and abroad.

Does **18683** people mean a lot or a little? We ask ourselves and we do not have an answer. But we do have a feeling: when it comes to despair and hope, this means a lot to us, and even more to the people on the other end of the line.

A telephone line like a ray of hope.

What can the figure **18683** be compared to?

Approx. **18.400** people is the population of the town Edineț in 2019.

EDINEȚ



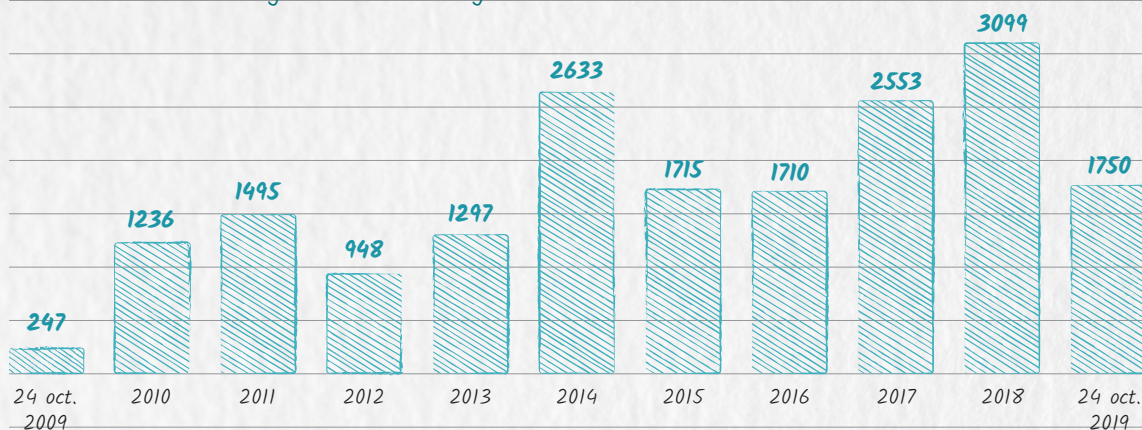
18.150 young people have been registered for the BAC session of 2018.



We know that numbers speak for themselves. But we also know that the numbers don't speak of the scale of the violence phenomenon, but rather about that dramatic moment when a woman, on the edge of despair, gathered the courage to call and ask for help. In part II we will be telling stories, starting from the Saturday afternoon, a week before the launch of the service - "I'm not going to the police because they won't do anything, but I also don't want to leave home... What should I do?" ...

Launched on November 2nd 2009, the Trust Line has registered 247 calls in the first two months - 4 calls a day. Four calls a day mean a lot for a new service that is dedicated exclusively to victims of domestic violence.

Number of calls registered annually



The number of calls and their profile can be explained largely by the awareness campaigns carried out, which brought the service closer to the people facing domestic violence, but also to the larger community.

Thus, in 2010 and 2011, International Centre 'La Strada' ran the campaign "A healthy family is one without violence", which included the production and streaming of two video materials. The campaign was carried out in two consecutive stages. The first one focused especially on raising awareness of the fact that violence follows a cyclical pattern, which can be broken only with the intervention of specialists. Phase two focused on acknowledging the first signs of domestic

violence and encouraging the population to adopt a firm stand against any form of domestic violence – psychological, economic, sexual, and social. This stage of the campaign also encouraged people subjected to domestic violence to seek specialized assistance from the first signs of violence, thus preventing more severe forms of violence.

When the second phase of the campaign started after the launch of the new video, the profile of the calls to the Trustline has changed. If in the first stage of the campaign the callers were predominantly reporting physical violence, after stage two the spectrum of domestic violence described in the phone calls has extended to economic, spiritual, psychological and sexual violence.

It now appears that men of various occupations and from various backgrounds not only report cases of domestic violence, but also admit to being subjects in this phenomenon, some of them aggressively manifesting their disapproval of the content of the video. At the same time, the number of calls from members of the community has increased, some calls and complaints coming from professional groups from different fields.

The diversification in the reaction of the population is explained by several factors such as: the inclusion of different protagonists (representing the voices of all the population of the country); the mention of several forms of violence; the fact that the first video was educational and informative about the circle of violence and the harm of tolerating domestic violence (particularly physical violence) – the aim of the video material was exclusively to motivate the victim to call the Trust Line.

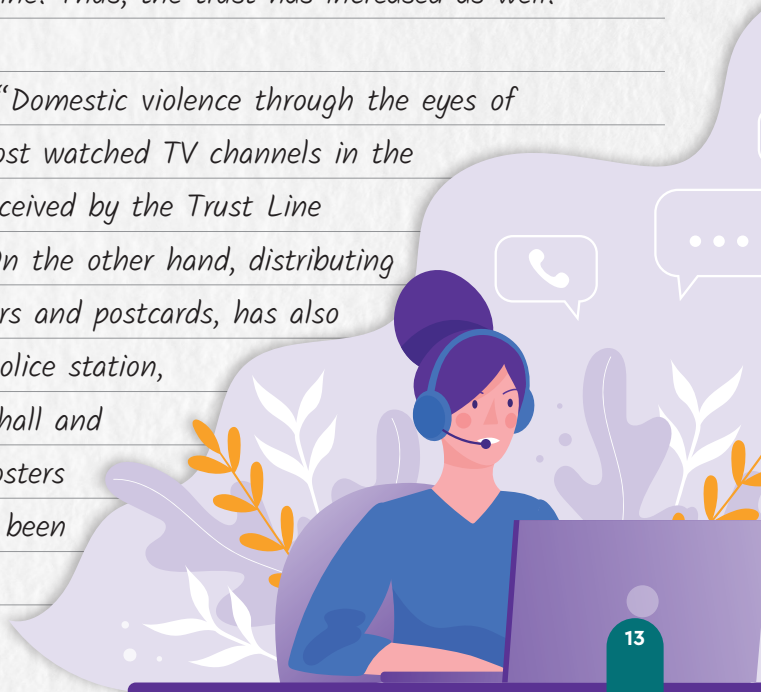
**“You have called
the Trust Line.
I am listening...”**

The years 2012, 2014 and 2018 are associated with the lowest and highest number of calls registered in a year, figures directly related to the campaigns promoting the service.

The year 2012 registered the lowest number of calls – 948 – the reason being that there were no campaigns run that year. In 2014, due to the continuous promotion of the service, the number of calls has almost tripled – 2633 calls.

The national campaign “Domestic violence through the eyes of children” carried out in the period September - December 2017, as well as the national campaign “16 days of activism against gender-based violence” have prompted a substantial increase in the calls to the Trust Line. Thus, the trust has increased as well.

On one hand, streaming the video “Domestic violence through the eyes of children” at prime-time on the most watched TV channels in the RM doubled the number of calls received by the Trust Line consultants during the campaign. On the other hand, distributing promotional material, such as posters and postcards, has also proven to be very efficient. Every police station, medical centre, mayor’s office/city hall and other public places have had the posters displayed, while the postcards have been directly distributed to victims and



potential victims of domestic violence. This way, beneficiaries have been informed about their rights, and the specialized services that are available to them.

The highest number of calls in the history of the Trust Line was registered in 2018. Again, the increase was determined by the information campaign carried out at the end of the year about the availability of the service. From the total of 3096 calls that year, 868 of them were registered in December.

We believe that running information and awareness campaigns regularly, at least once a year, is very necessary.

However, it should be noted that the trends of the most recent years show more than 2000 calls a year, regardless of whether or not a campaign was run. This is due to the stability of the service and the fact that it is perceived as a key link to accessing specialized services.



The dynamics of the domestic violence phenomenon

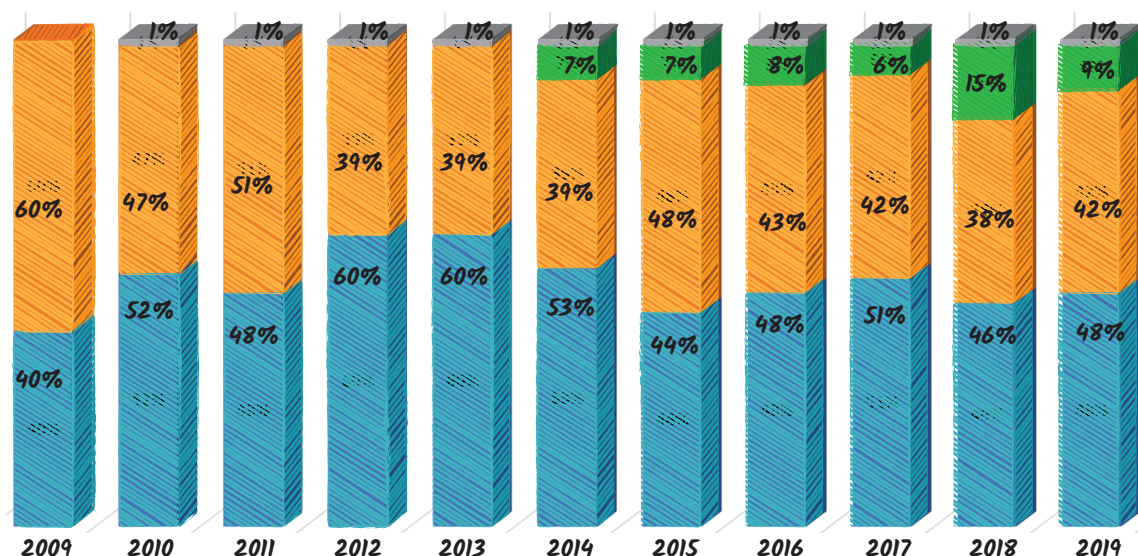
Where are our beneficiaries from?

When do they call and why then specifically?

One of the myths about domestic violence is that this phenomenon mostly happens in rural areas. Research in the field and the figures we have registered over the years at the Trust Line confirm that it is, in fact, a myth.

The dynamic of calls based on region

■ Rural - 8315 calls ■ Unknown - 9120 calls
■ Urban/Chişinău - 9120 calls ■ International - 51 calls



The diverse geography of the calls show that domestic violence takes place both in the urban and rural environment.

shows that the highest percentage of calls coming from rural areas was 60% in 2009, and the lowest – 38% in 2018.

The statistical data collected during the 10 years of activity of the Trust Line shows that almost every other call (45%) comes from a rural area. A summary analysis of the 10 years

Calls were registered from all regions, but if we sum up the parameters urban and Chisinau, every year this parameter exceeds the rural one. Still, it cannot be stated that domestic violence

is more common in cities/towns than in villages. This is probably because a higher level of information is associated with urban areas. The fact that the largest number of calls come

from Chisinau does not mean that that's where the most domestic violence cases are – the capital has the highest population and is historically more active and better informed.

When do victims of domestic violence call and why?

The trends have stayed consistent over the years, the highest number of calls is registered either at the **beginning of the week**, or **just before the weekend, between 10:00 and 14:00**, which indicates about when the acts of domestic violence happen – at the times when both partners are at home.

Victims suffering from domestic violence prefer to call when they are away from the aggressor – when he is away at work, the chil-

dren are at school/kindergarten, and she is home alone. The large number of calls early in the morning shows that some women prefer to call from work or from their relatives or neighbours, feeling safer there. After 20:00 the calls received are often SOS calls that require an emergency intervention. The subjects of domestic violence are most often at home in the evening.

“Last night, at about 10 pm it started again... I left the house and took the child with me...”

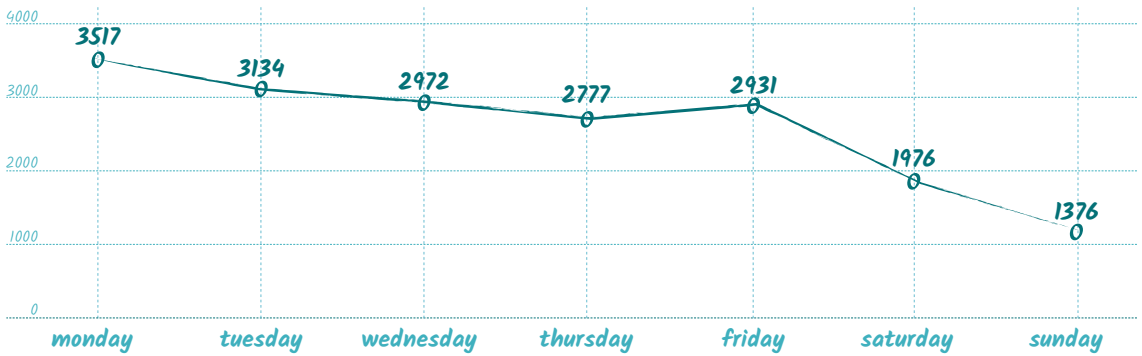
Mondays and Fridays – the days with the highest number of calls

Many of the victims prefer to call at the beginning of the week. Why so? Because at the weekend, the victim and the aggressor spend more time together. It is the days of partying, meeting up with friends and relatives, which

also means that alcohol is being consumed. It is particularly in these circumstances that the tension between partners rises. Usually, this speaks of the acts of domestic violence that happen during the weekend.

“Last night he woke up still drunk and started to shout... I've waited outside until 3 am...”

Dynamic of calls based on the day of the week



Why Fridays? Because it is the day before the weekend, which means the partners will be both at home. Because the tension grows, the victims feel the need to inform themself-

ves about the actions they should take in case anything happens, a safety plan in a way, or even to reduce their anxiety.



Types and forms of domestic violence

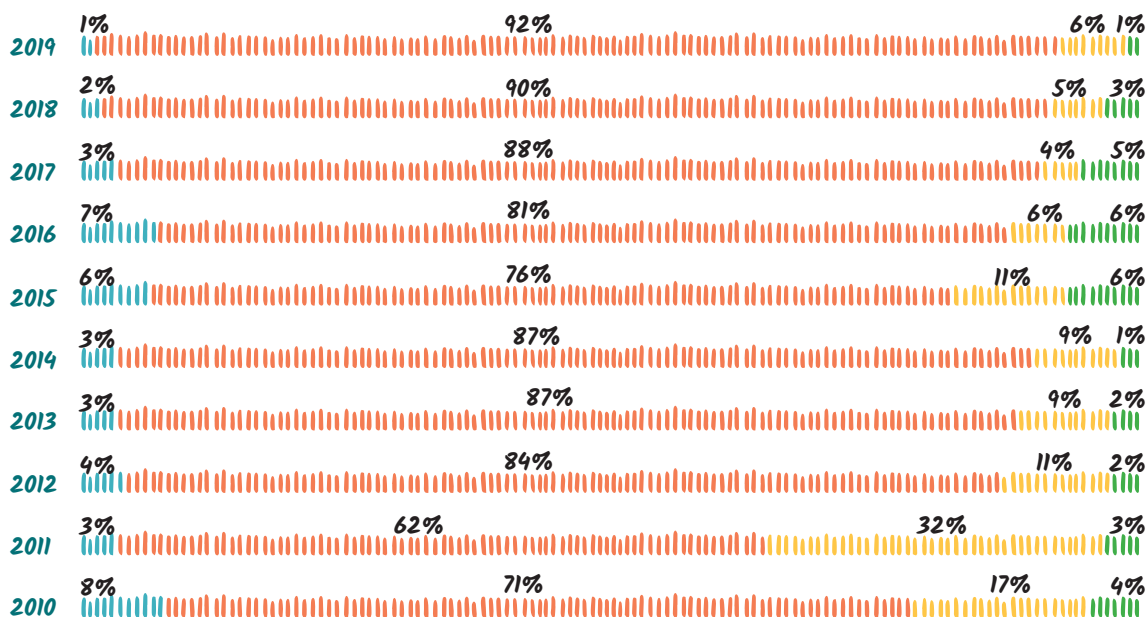
Domestic violence presents itself as a combination of different forms of abusive behaviour from the aggressors.

According to victims' confessions, domestic violence takes different shapes, more or less visible, such as physical, psychological, sexual, economic or spiritual violence. Violent people exhibit a series of aggressive behavio-

urs in a mixture of coercive acts and attacks of different forms. Most often though, physical violence is combined with psychological violence.

The other forms of violence are mentioned less frequently, depending on the objectives of the awareness campaigns run.

Dynamic of the forms of violence from the perspective of the calls from the beneficiaries of the service



Combined (economic, psychological, physical)

Physical and psychological

Psychological

Combined (sexual, physical, psychological)



Physical violence, combined with psychological violence

Numerically, apart from some insignificant increases/decreases, the most common form of violence is physical violence. Therefore, after phase 1 of the 2010 campaign “A healthy family is one without violence” which used the slogan “You can have a life without fear”, the Trust Line registered 71% physical violence cases. Where as in 2011, after the phase 2 of the campaign, the Trust Line registered the lowest number of calls about just physical violence combined with psychological violence (62% of the total number of calls). This decrease can be explained by the topic addressed in the campaign, which encouraged the identification of other forms of domestic violence.



Starting from 2012, there is a significative increase in the number of calls that state the physical form of domestic violence – over 80% from the total number of calls, with a small decrease in 2015.

Such situations are characterized by minor body injuries (hits to different body parts), medium or severe (broken limbs or ribs, concussions, disorders of the auditory and visual system). Victims are slapped, pulled by the hair, assaulted, pushed, punched and kicked in the face, stomach, back, thrown out of their homes etc.





Psychological violence

The highest number of calls regarding psychological violence has been registered in 2011. This fact is confirmed by the positive impact of the phase 2 of the awareness campaign “It is not normal to consider violence a norm”. This campaign has raised awareness about other forms of violence except physical, manifested through insults, intimidation, swearing, shouting, negligence, exaggerated jealousy, emotional blackmail involving the children, death threats – it encouraged women to ask for specialized help.

Still, after the end of the campaign, the number of cases which accuse psychological violence only gradually decreases.





Economic violence

In the 10 years of activity of the Trust Line, economic violence, combined with psychological or physical violence was registered in low, but constant numbers – about 4% of the total. Usually, cases concern an excessive control of spending. Victims are denied access to common incomes, sometimes their own as well, or to other important resources such as food, medication, education, or work.

“It is not normal to say that an unbeaten woman is like an un-swept house... to humiliate your woman so you can feel a man... to blame it on alcohol... or on the lack of money”.

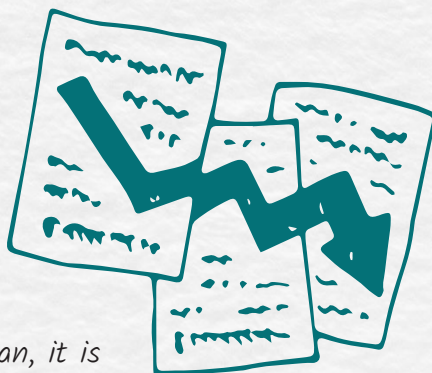
Usually, women who are victims of economic violence,

- >> Don't work, either they are housewives or on maternity leave and the husband is the one who provides for the family, and he considers he can share the money in the way he finds fit;*
- >> Sometimes even if the woman provides for the family and the husband does not work, he controls the spend, while also complaining that the income is modest;*
- >> Both the husband and wife don't work, and the occasional incomes obtained are strictly monitored. Moreover, the aggressor blames the victim for not finding a job, while not putting in any effort to provide for the family himself.*





In the past years, with the increase of the number of companies that offer micro-financing to the population, there have been cases registered when the aggressor forces the victim to return the debt acquired without her knowledge or consent. Moreover, when partners take a loan, it is usually in the victim's name, which metaphorically ties the victim by her hands and legs.



Sexual Violence

Much like economic violence, sexual violence is manifested in combination with psychological and/or physical violence. Cases of sexual violence are infrequent, and the number of reports decreases year on year. The highest amount was registered in 2015-2016.

Usually, physical beatings are followed by marital rapes and perverse actions, women being forced into sexual intercourse, sometimes in the presence of children.

Sometimes, the sexual abuse is manifested by forcing the victim to have an abortion or to have unprotected sexual intercourse, exhibiting genitals, bringing into practice perverse sexual behaviours from porn movies, threatening to post indecent photos/videos of the victim on social media, forcing the victim to have sexual intercourse or get naked in front of children or forcing the victim to witness sexual intercourse of the aggressor and another woman.





The fear and shame stops these women to talk about these things, because the subject of sex is considered taboo, and many of them consider that it is their duty as wives to satisfy all their husbands' sexual desires when and how they want it.

This is what 10 years of the Trust Line have showed in terms of the forms of domestic violence:

>> All awareness campaigns that present the forms of violence determine an increase in the number of reports, but this increase will be maintained only during the period that the campaign is run.

*>> **Physical** violence is still the most strongly and often recognized, followed by **psychological** violence in a smaller proportion. Women speak of **sexual** violence very little, not because it does not happen or it is not recognized, but because it is “so intimate, so personal, so shameful”.*



How the phenomenon of domestic violence is understood by the community – the evolution of calls from community members over the years

From the total of 18683 calls registered by the Trust Line during 10 years of activity, 11852 cases referred to domestic violence, which is 64% of the total.

From the 11852 calls which concerned domestic violence, 71% were calls from victims - full of despair and at the same time hope, while 23% of the total number of calls were from members of the community.

The trends in the calls received from members of the community have stayed more or less the same, the differences being almost insignificant: 21% in 2010, 26% in 2011, a decrease to 20% in 2014 and an increase to 23% in 2018 and 2019.

What do these figures speak (scream!) of?

Firstly, these numbers show that the Trust Line is a specialized service mostly used by its direct beneficiaries, particularly when it comes to such a sensitive phenomenon like domestic violence.

At the same time, the 23% of calls received from the members of the community is **surprising because of its persistent nature**.

Of course, it would be best if our society was less tolerant and more proactive when it co-

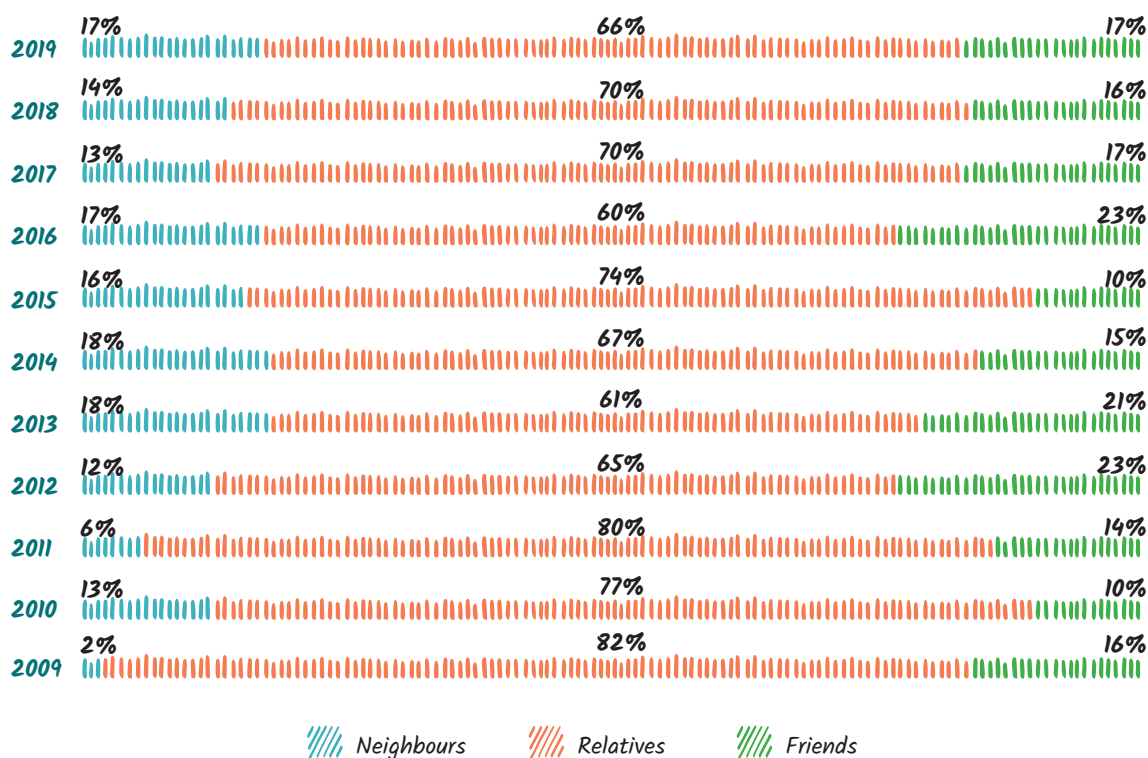
mes to witnessing acts of violence. In time, a higher number of calls from community members would be a good sign... but the constant rate shows that there is a part of the population - every fourth citizen, who is not indifferent to violence and who we can rely on.

Who are the community members who ask for our help most often? Relatives, friends or neighbours of the victims signal about the cases of domestic violence in the families of their relatives (mother's, sister's, sister-in-law's etc.), friends and neighbours.

8 out of 10 calls are received from women.



Dynamic of calls received from members of the community



Usually, relatives signal about cases of violence in their extended family, asking for help and taking responsibility for the victims, they are proactive and take actions on their behalf. The relatives also try convincing their victim-relatives to break the circle of violence.

Calls are often received from mothers over 45, who feel incapable to interfere in their daughters' or grandchildren's life who are facing violence. On other pole, it is the daughters who call, after they've detached themselves from the violent environment (went to study in a different place/got married and moved out) and want to help their mothers break the circle of violence, which has been maintained for many years.

Most of the calls received from men concern notifications about cases of violence where the victim is a close relative – sister, mother,

daughter, sister-in-law, friend or neighbour. These notifications usually refer to severe cases, where the life of the victim is in danger. In these cases, the violence is so deeply rooted, that the women don't even try to change the situation, they are dependent on the aggressor and after every attempt to leave him, the woman is either severely abused, or she comes back willingly, invoking different reasons. Male callers are usually brief, even shy sometimes, they ask for "concrete" help, requesting our direct intervention or giving particular indications to follow.

Often the callers ask for advice on how they could themselves efficiently intervene in these situations.

When neighbours call the Trustline, it is because they hear screaming from their neighbours and ask us to intervene directly or

to guide their actions, or they ask what to do and who to contact. These people are usually the ones whom the victims seek help from, hence they're trying to find information on how to efficiently intervene in these situations.

What makes them call and what are the trigger factors for this category of the community?

- ➡ They feel bad for the children raised in those families
- ➡ They have witnessed repeated acts of violence
- ➡ They feel sorry for vulnerable people (with physical or mental disabilities; elderly)
- ➡ They are bothered by the noise coming from the neighbours when the acts of violence happen
- ➡ Conflict relationship between neighbours (the violence does happen, but the incentive to call was the conflict relationship with the neighbours)

When it comes to **friends/acquaintances**, they usually find out about the domestic violence from the victims' confessions (who are hesitant to seek help from relatives), or when the victims had a crisis situation and sought specific help (temporary shelter, material help etc.).

Trigger factors:

- ➡ They are on good terms with the victim, a relationship based on respect, reciprocity, and responsibility ("it is my duty to do something, I respect her.")
- ➡ Deep compassion towards the victim or people close to the victim
- ➡ Feeling sorry for the children
- ➡ Fear to lose a close person
- ➡ Repulsion towards the aggressor.

Apart from reporting the cases of violence, these people often need emotional support from the counsellor themselves, because they live the drama of their close friends very intensely. Furthermore, many such beneficiaries speak not only on behalf of the victim, but on their own behalf too, as they may face violence in their own family, but do not have the courage to openly ask for help.

State response to cases of domestic violence

- ➡ Response from the judicial system
- ➡ Response from the social system
- ➡ Response from the medical system

The best feedback about how functional a law is or how accessible services are is given by the people who the law was elaborated for and intends to protect. In the case of the Trust Line, the best feedback is from the victims of domestic and sexual violence!

It should be noted that a large proportion of beneficiaries have stated that the Trust Line was the first service they have addressed for information and guidance, many of them refusing to contact competent authorities.

Most often, the reason for not contacting the authorities is the feeling of fear and shame. Fear has many dimensions – fear of the aggressor, fear not to amplify the further acts of violence from the aggressor, fear that the partner would take custody of their underage children, fear of potentially damaging the future career of their children if she contacts the law enforcement agencies, fear that the aggressor will destroy common goods, threatening to set fire to their household etc. The feeling of shame of the domestic violence victim is usually derived from the reaction of the

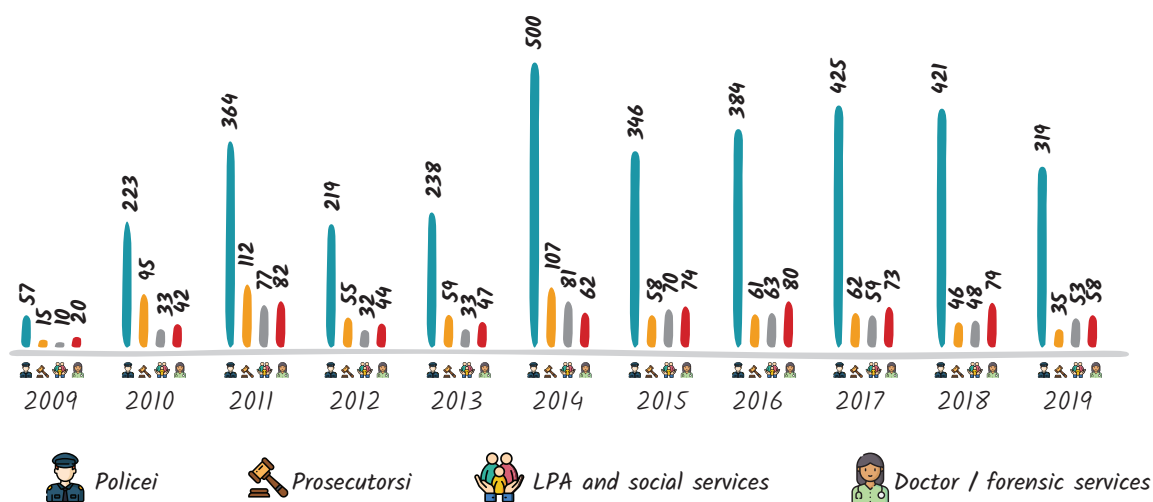
community, the victim's children, extended family and even the reaction of professionals.

Most often, victims have requested help from law enforcement agencies and judicial institutions. This is natural because of their mandate and existent protection mechanisms - Emergency Restraining Order and Protection Order.

Still, it should be noted that law enforcement agencies, particularly the police, are the authorities that are contacted most frequently – 20% of the total number of domestic violence victims have asked for help from the police.

Since 2014, the number of calls to the police regarding domestic violence has increased, which confirms that the efforts made by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in promptly and efficiently intervening in domestic violence cases have been successful and the population is now better informed about the competent authorities who must intervene in these situations.

What institutions have the victims addressed to for help



The training courses “Good practices of the police in combating and solutioning domestic violence cases” organized by the Women’s Law Centre during 2012-2015 have had a significant contribution. Experts from “La Strada”, along with other colleagues, were trainers at these events, and have trained over 1000 policemen. The tool provided “Practical Guide for the efficient intervention of the police in cases of domestic violence” has contributed to better interventions of the police on matters of domestic violence.

Over the years, there has been a constant increase in the level of knowledge of the callers about the possibility of obtaining protection through Protection Orders and about the provisions of Law no. 45. But despite running several information campaigns and the more active involvement of the police, the increased level of knowledge cannot be attributed to all victim categories.

Among the people who have requested assistance from the Trust Line are victims who have identified themselves as victims and decided to benefit from these rights. But the-

re are also victims of domestic violence who either don’t know their rights or they do know them but hesitate to ask for help for various reasons.

This shows that there is a need for continuous efforts in informing the population, including the most vulnerable part by organizing reaching out campaigns which would facilitate and improve the access to the necessary assistance.

The Courts, as well as the police and the Prosecutor’s Office are a very important link in efficiently solutioning cases of domestic violence, either through criminal procedure or civil cases.

However, relatively few beneficiaries of the Trust Line have been in contact with judges. This is directly related to a gap we’ve identified: the access to judicial services, particularly for beneficiaries who live far from district centres and municipalities, is very limited, and taking a case to court requires the assistance of a lawyer or at least a jurist.

Unfortunately, there are few organizations that offer legal assistance to victims of domestic violence free of charge, they lack the resources to do so. At the same time, the territorial offices for state-guaranteed legal assistance are located only in four key locations in the country (Chisinau, Balti, Cahul, Comrat) and they are either overloaded or hard to reach for people from rural areas.

Together with law enforcement agencies and courts, social workers and medical staff are other major professional groups that play a role in preventing and combating domestic violence.

As for doctors, we are certain that the true number of people reaching out to them is much higher, but women usually don't talk about the violence they are faced with at home, and the doctors prefer to "not see" and "not hear" anything, as the victims have confessed. As a consequence, no one makes the connection between repeated beatings and disorders of the nervous system or visual and/or auditory impairments.

Social services haven't proven that they're doing their jobs to the level required by law either when it comes to domestic violence. Although they have benefited from constant trainings, social workers have shown that they have insufficient training when they had to get involved. Sadly, there doesn't seem to be any improvement over the years.

This is partly because the population doesn't know that they can address the social workers on this matter, they believe that social services only provide financial help, social allowances and fill social surveys. The social workers also "pretend to forget" what their role is, or they just don't know it.

In this regard, the "Instructions on the intervention of medical institutions and social service territorial structures in cases of domestic violence" elaborated in 2018 by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection in partnership with national NGOs and international organizations aim to improve the systematic approach to these cases.

Authorities that should intervene and the difficulties encountered

Law no. 45-XVI on preventing and combating domestic violence was adopted on the 1st of March 2007 in the Republic of Moldova- this is the law that is meant to defend the victims of domestic violence. The main concerns of the Trust Line consultants were the knowledge of the law by the subjects of domestic violence and especially the efficient application of the legal provisions by the relevant professional groups. On this matter there has been a positive dynamic noticed over the years of activity of the Trust Line.

Information campaigns and constant trainings of professional groups authorised to intervene by law, run by state institutions or NGOs, but also the increase in the interest of the law enforcement agencies towards this phenomenon have all contributed to an improvement of the state response in cases of violence.

During the first year of activity of the Trust Line, few people – beneficiaries or representatives of professional groups – knew about the existence of law no. 45, but over the time, this has changed for the better. The population is now better informed and is requesting the application of legal norms, and those authorised to do so, can respond more efficiently to these requests.

A clearer perception of domestic violence as a crime increased the number of notifications to the law enforcement agencies especially, requests for the issue of protection measures – either the Protection Order or the Emergency Restraining order.

However, this positive evolution does not mean that there are no difficulties. On one hand, the implementation of the law brings into light various legal gaps that need to be removed, and on the other hand it becomes clear that the implementation mechanism is not perfect.

To be more precise, to solve cases of domestic violence, the law stipulates the competencies of the multi-disciplinary teams. Which means that at a community level, there are teams created from representatives of law enforcement agencies, local public authorities, social services and medical staff.

In the following paragraphs we will analyse the role and the involvement of each professional group mentioned through the stories told by the beneficiaries of the Trust Line and the difficulties that they encountered when trying to solve domestic violence situations. We will also follow the changes that have happened over the 10 years.

This is especially about the not always efficient interventions of the professional groups authorised to prevent and combat domestic violence – law enforcement agencies (police, Prosecutor's Office, Courts), local public authorities, social services, medical institutions, shelters – but also about the difficulties met regarding the multidisciplinary approach to these cases.

Sadly, it has been observed that representatives of structures that are authorised by law with certain competences (mostly police and social workers) collaborate very poorly among themselves. In this context, there have been sufficient signals from the beneficiaries, who told us about how they had to go to the mayor, social worker, police and how all of them tried to put the responsibility to solution this issue onto the other, without actually intervening and collaborating with each other.

The issues can also be attributed to the stereotypes about the superior masculinity myth or perceiving domestic violence as a norm, when neither the police, nor the social worker or doctors intervene promptly in these situations. This is often because they are too full of prejudices, or they are themselves victims of domestic violence, or even worse, they are aggressors themselves.

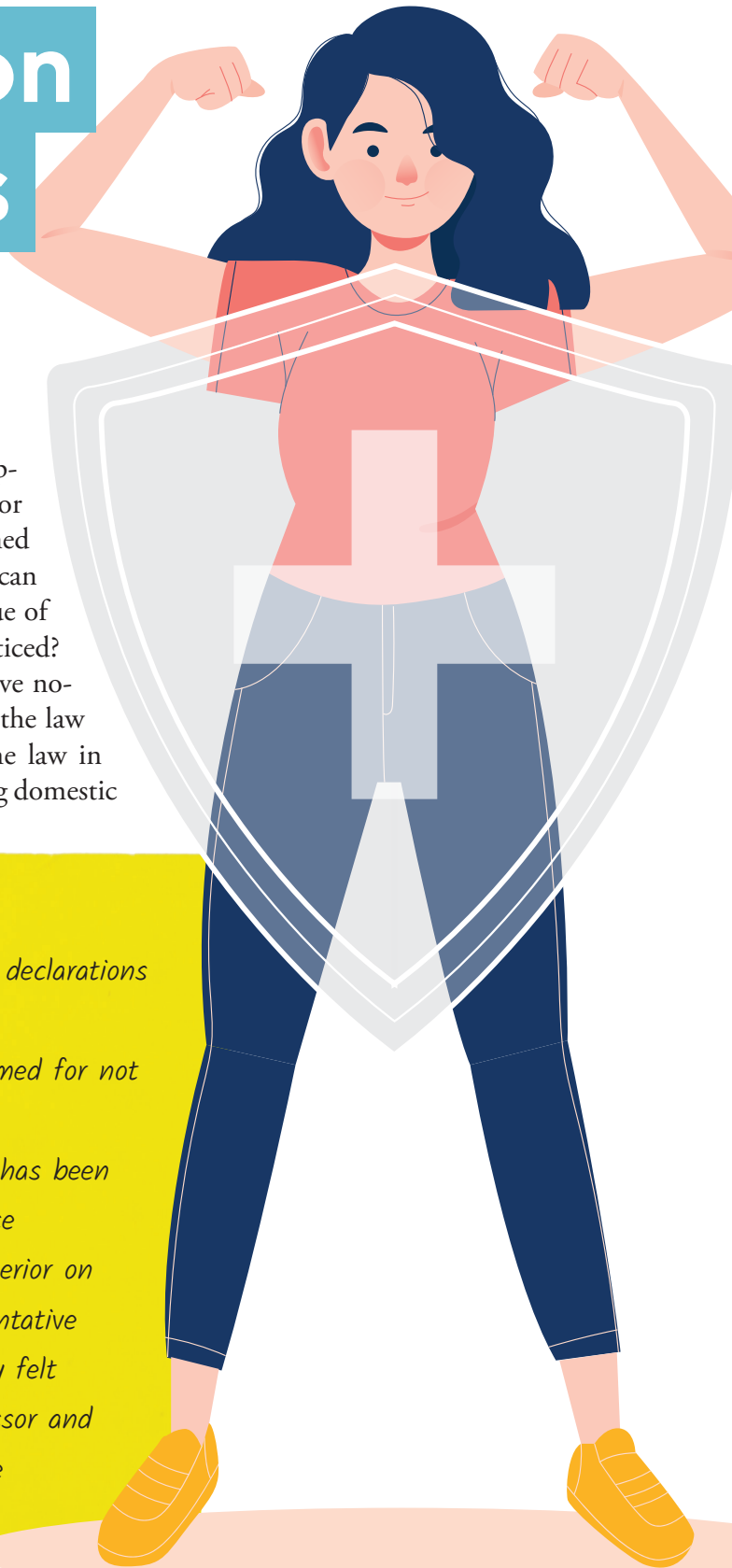
Protection Measures

The Protection Order

Victims of domestic violence, attempting to secure their safety, assisted or not assisted by a lawyer and informed about the protection measures they can benefit from, have requested the issue of protection orders. What have we noticed? In the first 5 years of activity we have noticed a high level of resistance from the law enforcement authorities to apply the law in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence.

To be exact:

- *There is a lack of trust in the declarations of the victims*
- *Victims have been directly blamed for not solving the problem privately*
- *Arguments that the aggressor has been provoked to the acts of violence*
- *Property right was deemed superior on some occasions, or the representative of the law enforcement agency felt compassion towards the aggressor and the fact that he wouldn't have anywhere to stay.*



In 2010, the examination procedures of the requests for protection orders and the reports of domestic violence were carried out with the **preconception that the victim is lying** about the acts of violence. In 2019, even if the authorities don't always show empathy, getting a protection measure is much faster and simpler.

However, we should emphasize the difficulties that victims encounter in the process of obtaining the protection order.

Sadly, the complications in giving legal assistance continue to exist in the present too. Especially, these are related not so much to the content of the law, but rather its implementation: clear and concise mechanisms to put legal provisions into practice are lacking, and there is no coordination between the institutions that are meant to prevent and combat domestic violence.

The relevant law stipulates clear responsibilities for multiple professional groups, such as representatives of law enforcement agencies, social services, medical staff, local public administration authorities, which are obliged by the law to react promptly to all notifications, to inform the victims of their rights and to take the necessary actions to ensure the protection of the victim.

The fact that authorities lack knowledge on the legal provisions in the field of domestic violence and/or the implementation mechanisms is another factor that determines the failure to efficiently solve cases of violence. In many situations, the intervention of the authorities was not adequate, or it lacked all together, for example the intervention of the police results in only a fine or a verbal reprimand to the aggressor as a "protection measure".

During 2010-2012, a great part of requests to issue Protection orders were rejected by Courts.

There have also been cases when the request for protection orders have been fulfilled only partially, not all the protection measures requested were implemented. To be precise, judges refused to implement the protection measure by which the aggressor had to evacuate the house, explaining that the aggressor has property right too.

Only after 2013, when the Republic of Moldova was first convicted on matters of domestic violence at the European Court of Human Rights, when protection measures were applied, the life and integrity of the victim was the priority set, and not the property right of the aggressor, accepting without hesitation the measure by which the aggressor had to evacuate the house which was his property.

Terms of issue of the Protection Order

The law is quite clear in what concerns the terms of issue of the Protection order by the court, but several violations of the terms have been registered in the process of requesting the issue on behalf of the victim.

The analysis of all the protection orders that were requested and issued during the period show an improvement in this situation, for which we share the joy, much like we share the efforts. During the first three years, barely any Protection Orders were issued within 24 hours, but since 2014 – this term of issue has been more or less met.

Executing the Protection Order

When the number of protection orders issued started increasing, deficiencies related to the execution and abiding to them have appeared. The police and social workers were responsible for ensuring this. Although such violations have also been registered in 2010-2012, the most violations have been registered after 2013, when the number of orders issues has increased significantly.

After the protection orders have been issued, the courts have to send them to the police and the General Directorate of Social Assistance by fax or courier. But there have been multiple cases registered when the orders sent by post would only reach the police station a week or 10 days after the order was issued. Sending the order from the Station to the police department in the proximity of the victim would also take time. In total, from the moment the protection order was issued, to the moment the aggressor was presented with it, 10 to 30 days would have passed! This does not make the protection order an emergency protection measure!

Supervising the execution of Protection order

Unfortunately, there are still cases when the police have not ensured that the aggressor abides by the measures established by the protection order, and has not fined the aggressor when he has violated the terms of the protection order.

Although the law obliges the police to supervise the obeying of the restrictions established by the order by the aggressor, the police often

has not promptly reacted to the calls from the victim informing them of the breach of the protection order.

In this regard, it was necessary to file several complaints about the inactions of the local police to the Police Inspectorate and the district's Prosecutor's office. Only after that the regional police would react to the notifications about the breach of the protection measures established by the protection order.

Therefore, we find that in many cases the protection order is inefficient in countering the acts of violence committed by the aggressor against the victim. Law no. 45 provides criminal prosecution for breaching the terms of protection orders, but this doesn't always happen in real life.

Sadly, after over a decade since law no. 45 came into force, the monitoring mechanism of the execution and supervision of the protection orders and the measures indicated by them is not fully realized.

Emergency Restraining Order



On the 16th of March 2017 new legal provisions have come into force in the law no. 196 from 28th of July 2016, by which a new form of victim protection was introduced – **Emergency Restraining Order**.

Using this provisional protection measure, the police can immediately remove the aggressor from the family household and establish interdictions as provided by the law to prevent the recurrence of violence actions. This way, the victim and the other family members are safe in their home.

If, at the scene, after evaluating the risks and circumstances the police officer suspects that violent actions have been committed, **the officer is obliged to immediately order the issue of an emergency restraining order against the aggressor.** This way, the crisis is overcome and the actions to confirm the crime of domestic violence are undertaken.

The emergency restraining order is issued for a **maximum of 10 days** and it comes into force immediately, the aggressor and the victim (if the victim is a child – the legal guardian of the child) are informed about their rights and obligations and the consequences of not following the terms of the Emergency Restraining Order.

Moreover, Order no. 360 from the General Inspectorate of Police (from August 2018) has further improved the intervention process. Along with the methodical instruction on police intervention, they contain all necessary appendices, including the Risk assessment questionnaire that officers have to fill in when issuing the Emergency Restraining Order.

This measure was requested by the police officers during the trainings from the years 2012-2015 carried out in partnership with experts from La Strada. It was also then that they got to practice filling in these risk assessment questionnaires.

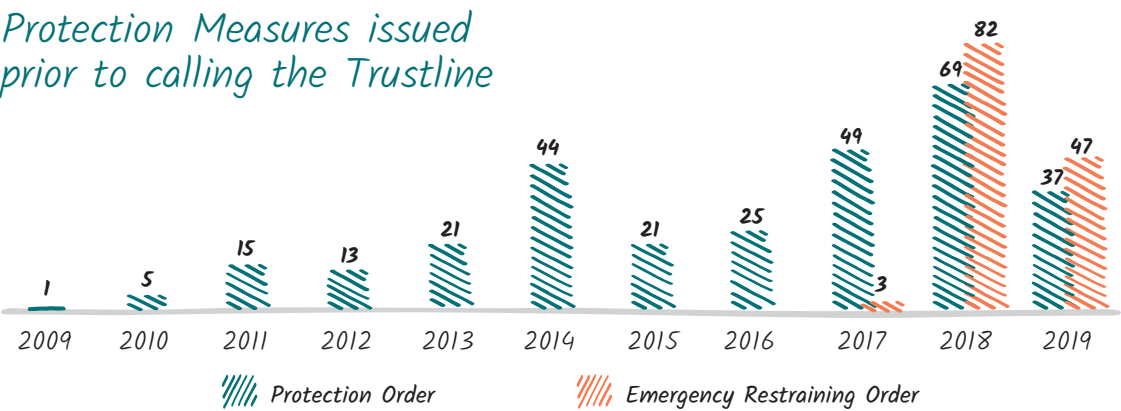
We can say that the implementation of the Emergency Restraining Orders was better than that of the Protection Orders.

The first Protection Order was issued a year after the law entered into force, whereas the first Emergency Restraining Order was issued the very next day.

According to data from the police of the Republic of Moldova, during only 2 years, **over 6000** Emergency restraining orders have been issued.

From all the people who have rung the Trust Line, only 132 have stated that they have benefited from such a protection measure (3 in 2017, 82 in 2018 and 47 in 2019). In most cases these were issued for a period of 10 days and the aggressors have obeyed by them.

Protection Measures issued prior to calling the Trustline



The response of the law enforcement agencies

Apart from protection measures

The analysis of data collected during the 10 years of activity of the Trust Line for Women and Girls shows that the most difficulties that the beneficiaries were confronted with concern the activity of the police.

This is not because other professional groups would intervene more efficiently, but because, by law, it is the obligation of the police, prosecutors and judges to ensure public order by granting security of each person, and to apply fines too.

In the 10 years of activity of the Trust Line, some difficulties have remained constant, and unfortunately, they are still encountered in this decade.

*Dissatisfaction from the beneficiaries towards the police intervention, which often was just **a verbal reprimand or a fine for the aggressor**, which was paid from the family budget and often by the victim herself, although by law she shouldn't be doing so.*

In the first three years, there have been multiple cases when the police officers told the victims that if the fine was not paid by the aggressor, the victim has to pay. Usually, af-

ter such action the behaviour of the aggressor doesn't change or becomes worse.

Later, after the trainings that police officers have received, the number of fines has decreased. But this practice has not been completely abandoned.

*Another difficulty regards the cases when the **police doesn't efficiently intervene when notified**, or they refuse to register the complaints, claiming they "can't do anything to the aggressor" or that "it is private family business".*

At the same time, many women have confessed that they have been openly told to go home and accept the situation, because they show no sign of severe body injuries. They have also been warned that their children would have to suffer when they seek employment or enrolment into educational institutions if they proceed to file the complaint. According to the women, police sometimes threatened to fine both partners if they don't "calm down" or they've said that "the police has more important things to do".

This highlights another problem. Often the police officers don't know how to deal with

threats and complaints from the aggressors, who claim the inviolability of the home, the presumption of innocence, and the property right have all been violated. In this regard, the police governing body does not adopt a common legal position, often imposing disciplinary sanctions such as warnings for the officers. This fact often creates confusion, the police officer prefers not to intervene in cases of domestic violence that are not severe.

Many interventions were conducted late, or they never happened, although they were requested as a matter of urgency by calling 902. Usually, most difficulties appeared in the evening or at night. Some callers said they could not reach the police all together, and others said that they have managed to reach the police, but the intervention either wasn't operative, or it no one came to the scene all together.

In such cases, the police unit on-call notified the regional policeman, who had to move to the scene. What the policeman actually did most of the time was to call the victim directly, ask what happened over the phone and ask her to come to the police station the next day. Nothing more!

Since July 2018 when the National Service for Emergency calls 112 was launched, the situation has changed. Although there have been calls to the Trust Line which said that notifying the 112 did not result in anything,

the beneficiaries say that when there was an intervention, both the police and the ambulance would come to the scene.

*The last category of difficulties that victims have faced concerns the situations when the aggressor is **friends/a relative of the law enforcement agency representative**, which is why there was no intervention/the intervention from the police was inefficient.*

In such situations the victims have often been humiliated or mocked. There have been cases when the police officer has torn the victim's complaint in front of her, the officer "criticized" the aggressor for not "beating her enough if she managed to call the police", he took the certificate written by the forensic expert confirming the injuries, refusing to give it back and later denying it ever existed.

The inefficiency of the intervention of the police officers is also determined by other objective reasons, that also shouldn't be ignored. These include:

- >> Few police stations have cars, which makes travel to the scene more difficult for them. When a police officer is responsible for multiple villages in his region, it is difficult for him to intervene every time he is notified. Many policemen say that they have had to use their personal car for work and they haven't always been refunded for the fuel spent.
- >> Police stations are modestly equipped in terms of technology (computers, printers etc.)
- >> There is a lack of support in some domestic violence cases from investigation and prosecution bodies.

Difficulties which refer to the Local Public administration/the social assistance system

Local public authorities (LPA), which are represented by the community social worker, have an important role in protecting the victims of domestic violence. This role is explicitly fixed in the National Referral System for Assistance and Protection of Victims and Potential Victims of Trafficking (NRS) – a framework created especially to contribute to the cooperation and coordination of efforts of all the partners active in the field.

The community social worker has the defining role in the multidisciplinary team, he/she is de jure the person who has to manage the case, but de facto, few social workers know the stages of this process, and even fewer are the ones who apply them in their daily activities.

Social workers receive training, but they still appear to be insufficiently prepared for domestic violence situations. One of the reasons for this is the frequent change of staff: a low number of social workers keep their job long term, this is due to various reasons – low salaries, many responsibilities etc. This is why the job of many social workers only comes down to granting allowances and social benefits, and many of them do not know that their job description includes the responsibility to intervene in cases of domestic violence.

Another task is to form and coordinate the multidisciplinary team, an activity which entails more than filling in social questionnaires and visiting the victim. Sadly, often the social worker only visits the home of the family where domestic violence was signalled.

In tens of cases, the beneficiaries have mentioned the lack or the inefficiency of the interventions from the mayor or the social worker. If these do happen, they come down to just talks. Many times, the severity and urgency of the situation is not taken into account in cases of domestic violence. Taking action is postponed for unknown reasons, even if there is a considerable risk to the lives and health of underage children.

Or, in the cases of violence that children are involved in, namely the Local Public authorities have the most important role, because they represent guardianship authority in these situations and are responsible for the life and health of underage children.

Difficulties which refer to medical assistance

In cases of domestic violence, medical assistance includes:

- » Forensic services
- » Medical services in medical institutions of any type or level

The role of the forensic evaluation

Because forensic science is a science that combines biological science and social- legal science, it comes to support victims of domestic violence, by evaluating the physical abuse committed against them. This document fixes the severity of the body injuries and contributes to establishing the circumstances of the violence act.

In Chisinau and the district centres it is relatively easy to obtain a forensic evaluation, because there is a regional branch of the Forensic Medicine Centre in every district centre. This is why it is more difficult from vic-

tims in villages to obtain this. Travelling to a district centre involves additional costs, and the victims often don't have enough financial resources to pay for the forensic evaluation, not to mention the transport costs.

It should be noted that the forensic evaluation is conducted free of charge only when the victim has been referred by the police officer, not at the victim's own initiative.

The role of the medical staff

Health service providers are in the position to identify and intervene in situations of domestic violence because a significant percentage of people requiring medical help are those who have suffered from domestic violence. Many victims feel more comfortable to talk about what is happening at home with their GP or another specialist than to the regional police officer.

Still, the majority of the medical staff only offer medical assistance and sometimes emotional support, and very rarely collect the information or refer the patient to other competent professional groups who can intervene in these situations or to service providers in the field.

Medical staff should be the most active partners in identifying situations of domestic violence, the law stipulates concrete instructions in this context, but very few practitioners know about this role, and even less apply the instructions into practice.

Multidisciplinary collaboration and referral of beneficiaries

Considering the profile of the victims of domestic violence and their vulnerability, from the first years of activity it has been set as a given that the first contact between the victim and the service providers will be done by the counsellors of the Trust Line for Women and Girls.

For a person in crisis, a prompt reaction and an immediate response to their needs can be decisive in overcoming complications that may endanger their mental or physical health, socio-economic status or inter-relationships with others.

In this sense, the Trust Line is presently considered an important link in the assistance and protection system for victims of domestic violence on a national level, and its activity must be constant, uninterrupted.

When solving cases of violence, the institutions that are authorised by law to intervene in domestic violence situations are contacted most often. These include local public authorities, social workers, placement centres for victims of violence, maternal centres, and specialized NGOs.

Usually, the Trust Line counsellor makes the connection with the respective service, passes on the relevant information, and ensures that the beneficiary has reached the institution/organization.

Thereby, the counsellors of the Trust Line have offered the victim the full support necessary to solve the problems they are facing, ensuring access to specialized services according to the identified needs. Counsellors have facilitated communication, have given contact information of the relevant service providers, competent authorities and multidisciplinary teams nationally and locally. Thus, taking the hand reaching for help and giving help.

During the 10 years, the Trust Line counsellors have made 2914 interventions to facilitate the solving of 1380 cases registered by the Trust Line, referring them to other social services when needed.

In these situations, the intervention of the counsellors was necessary to overcome the imminent danger to the life or physical or mental integrity of the beneficiaries.

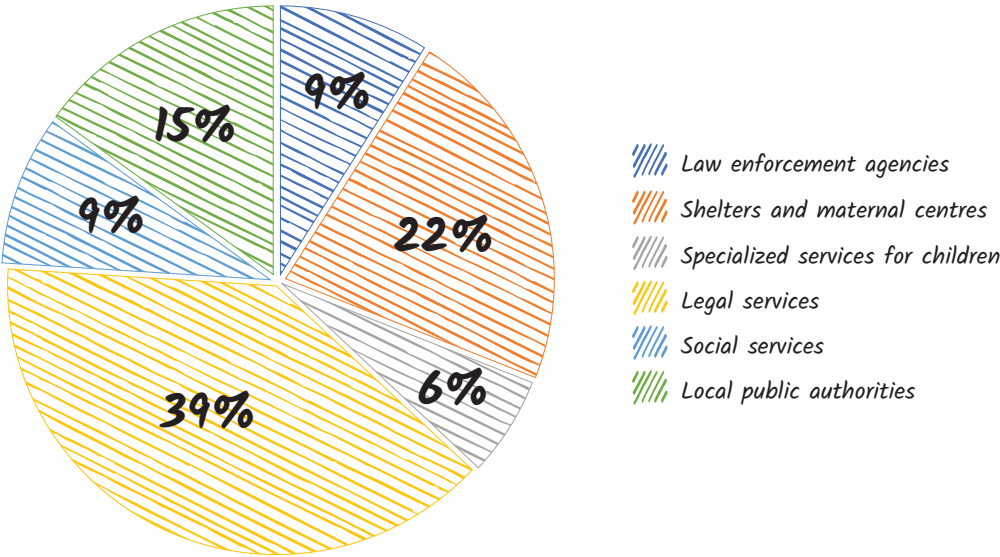
To ensure the safety of the victims and to respond to the immediate needs of the victims and their children, counsellors have intervened urgently based on the specifics of each case – the risks associated, the needs of the beneficiaries – aiming to eliminate all existing dangers.

In terms of a number of interventions, we cannot say anything about a dynamic or an increase over the years; because each case is very particular, the needs differ from case to case, and the specific of the service requires

us to protect the confidentiality of the information when the beneficiary asks us to do so.

Thus, most women – 39% – have been redirected to organizations that offer legal services – either state-guaranteed legal assistance or partner organizations in the field. In 22% of cases the beneficiaries needed to be placed into specialized maternal centres, and in 15% of cases it was necessary to notify the local public authorities and send formal letters of request.

Services notified in crisis situations and the referral of Trust Line beneficiaries



The referral of the beneficiaries to the specialized assistance services has been maintained over the years. There was no sign of an evolution or regression in this regard. Why? Because on one hand, the number of service providers has stayed the same, some regions having more, others less, and on the other hand the character of the subjects of domestic violence is very specific.

For example, the percentage of beneficiaries who have requested shelter is small. This is because placing victims into centres is a measure that ensures temporary protection and support, it does not solve the problem of domestic violence. Usually, victims have nowhere else to go, but back to their home, to the aggressor. Coming home, the victim finds that in the meantime, the aggressor

has sold household belongings and the household itself is in an awful state. Besides, in order to be placed into a shelter, the victim would have to take her children out of school/kindergarten, which explains why the percentage of people requesting shelter is so low.

In this regard, the protection measures (Protection Order and the Emergency Restraining Order) have not reduced the number of referrals of the beneficiaries to other ser-

vices, they have their well-defined role and are preferred by some beneficiaries, and they have extended the state response to cases of domestic violence by ensuring the immediate safety of the affected people.

Now it's time to listen the victims themselves – we are starting the second part of this journal, the part with all the confessions...

Diary.

Part II

Confessions from the other end of the line

0 8008 8008

Argument

In these confessions you will find a lot of suspension points. This is how we have chosen to blur out the tears, the despair, the sighs. These are too hard to put into words... which is why we've written them with our hearts. And we manifest them with everything we've felt, and especially everything the beneficiaries of the Trust Line have felt.

We have thought and written this part of the diary as a dialogue both with ourselves, about successes and failures, and with all those reading this diary, who want and can get involved in the fight for justice against violence. For the sake of children, Ionel from the "Domestic violence through the eyes of children" video. For the sake of women and girls. For the sake of all families.

This part includes 10 chapters, for the 10 years of activity of the Trust Line for Women and Girls 0 8008 8008, and we have mixed feelings about this figure. We want good

things to keep happening and to be long lasting. But when talking about violence - this should be eliminated all together.

In this new, better world, there would be no despair and pain, and a Trust Line would not be needed. A world like a home full of happiness, where the happiness is seen through the windows, and hidden things – pain, violence – will not be found, however hard you look.



First call.

Sadly, not the only one and definitely not the last one

24th of October 2009. Saturday. 16:30

On Saturdays, there's usually fewer people around at the office of International Centre "La Strada". But you'll always find the counsellors of the two hotlines managed by the centre.

That Saturday was no exception. The counsellor of the Hotline for safe migration and anti-trafficking was in the office – this service had already been around for 8 years at the

time. The counsellor was newly trained for a new service line that would be officially launched on November 2nd, 2009 – the Trust Line for Women and Girls.

Because the public didn't find out about the existence of the Trust Line for Women and Girls 0 8008 8008 until a week later, the first call registered was actually managed by the counsellor of the Anti-Trafficking hotline.

"...(Cries)... I am retired, but I still work. My husband is also retired, but he doesn't work anymore. He stays at home and constantly drinks. I don't remember the last time I've seen him sober... maybe in the mornings, when he just wakes up. He's very aggressive. He beats me a lot and he threatens to kill me. He keeps an axe or a hammer or other similar objects under the bed he sleeps on... he's asleep now... I'm very scared. I often think of ending my life. We have three children. They are all grown up and rarely come home, because of their father. He kicked one of the sons out. All the village knows what's going on in our family... and at work people know, I often have bruises and a swollen face... they all support me, but no one intervenes. He's not afraid of anyone, he's argued with everyone in the village. I'm not going to the police, they won't do anything, but I don't want to leave home either... what should I do?"

This was the first and probably the most difficult call received by the Trust Line. Calls like that – screams of despair and tears – have become the usual in the 10 years of activity of the Trust Line. But we are not used to not taking action, even if it is hard.

Why was the call difficult? Because...

On one hand we have:

A woman, victim of domestic violence, who has endured many beatings over the years, lives with her alcoholic husband. She continues to work even though she has reached the retirement age. She's the only one providing for her family and household, but she's scared she 'can't manage by herself'. The woman has invested a lot in the household and she doesn't want to leave. She has given birth and raised three children, and put up with the violence for their sake, because "the children

must have a father” she said. It seems like she has the support of relatives, but they do not get involved because they are scared, or because “it is private family business”. The woman is hesitant to call the police, because the last time she did so, the husband was fined, but she had to pay the fine.

On the other hand...

The Republic of Moldova already has a special law, Law no. 45 on the prevention and combating of domestic violence – but no one has informed this woman about this law and her rights.

Neither the local police officer, mayor, social worker nor the regional doctor – authorities empowered by law to prevent and combat domestic violence – have used the legal instruments available to them.

That’s when we understood. We chose to help the woman who picked up the phone and called us...

Launching the Trust Line at that exact moment was very timely and necessary. It ensures anonymity, confidentiality, a first aid, qualitative information, and a person who’d listen, understand, accept and not judge, all free of charge.

Our belief was and still is that a woman is able to overcome situations like this, she JUST NEEDS HELP. Because they feel paralyzed by fears related to safety, personal security within the family or outside, marginalized by the society, with their potential and abilities devalued, without any moral and psychological support, it is difficult for women and girls to break the vicious circle of violence, but not impossible.

10 years or 3650 days, and just as many nights of uninterrupted service of the Trust Line gives us the possibility to analyse the evolution of the phenomenon of violence against women, through the VOICES of our beneficiaries. 8 out of 10 calls received during this decade of activity were from women and girls.

So we begin...

“The Trust Line for Women and Girls, I am listening...”



0 8008 8008

Trust Line for Women and Girls

What it is and isn't...

“Hello, did I call Domestic violence? I am from the village... are you coming to get him?... oh you're not coming? How can you help us then?”...

Sometimes, in order to better explain what a phenomenon, object, service IS, it may be most suitable to explain what IT ISN'T.

The Trust Line for Women and Girls is neither a call centre, nor the Single National Emergency Call Service 112. Consequently, we are not the police, ambulance or the fire service, but we do perhaps have a common task – of saving people.

We have heard testimonies, confessions, very personal cries for help, almost intimate, somewhat unusual for the emergency calls to the public services: “because he is the father of my children”, “I feel sorry for him”, “the people in my village will talk about me if police comes to my house”, “I am scared”, “I want you to just scare him a little”.

Beneficiaries often call the Trust Line because they need an informal intervention, without protocol.

Our counsellors do more than just provide information and refer to other services. They are not robots and they don't sell pro-

ducts or services. They offer the beneficiaries a connectivity here and now and offer them support and help!

And the key word is Trust!

Counselling through the phone is suitable for the beneficiary, because it offers anonymity, confidentiality, and a special trust, almost intimate. When the telephone counselling begins, the “fellow traveller” effect appears, a psychological comfort is created making the woman talk about the most personal moments of her life, including those related to sexual and interpersonal relations.

Telephone counselling can be the best solution for women affected by domestic violence who have a highly victimized behaviour, a low self-esteem, are undecisive and shy, aren't confident in their own strengths, their decision making capacity is affected, they are isolated, and reserved. These people really find it hard to just take the phone and call. But in the moment that they do call, it is easier for them to confess over the phone, than confess to a person they are sitting in front of.

The fact that the Trust Line operates on a continuous 24/7 basis gives the callers a feeling of safety. Women and girls know that they can reach the Trust Line, that is free of

charge, at any moment, wherever they are, during an abuse or after or even to simply talk about thoughts and doubts they have about a relationship. In other words, the Trust Line is a space that encourages feelings and worries to be expressed and experiences to be told. A

first step, but a crucial one – for recovery. The purpose of this service is to connect! And this is what happens. “You have reached the Trust Line for Women and Girls. I am listening...”

Imagination Exercise

*It is late autumn and it's raining. A woman has run out of the house, her heart beating fast because of fear and pain. She is full of bruises or even blood, dressed in whatever she could grab first, she's not wearing shoes, she's crying and worrying that she's left her two children in the house. She's running as fast as she can to her neighbour, who fortunately opened the door and let her come in. She doesn't know what to do, to call or not to call. She calls. She is desperate. She isn't sure what she wants. There's thoughts and images going through her head: the children crying, things scattered around the house, his muddy shoes that stained the carpets, the food burning on the stove, the door she left open and his alcohol smell... and she starts telling you over the phone everything she's been through. And you listen, understand her pain and if you truly understand her, you have **CONNECTED!***

Next comes **the information!**

Yes! It is true that information is the first weapon of the victims to defend themselves. And if this weapon is introduced in the first act of this play, it will surely shoot with use in the later acts. We want our beneficiaries to know their rights and the services that are available to them. Everyone knows that an informed person is a protected person. This is true, but it isn't always enough.

This is why the next most important aim of the service is psychological counselling: active listening, empathic communication, unconditional acceptance etc., without judging, labelling, blaming and asking why. Support counselling focused on empowerment is essential, it is the key to an efficient intervention from the Trust Line.

After the women are informed and counted, some women know what they want to do next, others do not. This is because abuse

has a different impact on everyone. We know that everyone's experience is different and regaining control over one's life takes a great effort.

That's where the counsellor gets involved, he/she has the task of offering the victim the opportunity to explore, identify, and value her own resources needed to trigger a change. So that after the end of the counselling period, a victim is able to “help herself”.

Domestic violence and sexual violence are complicated and painful topics. The counsellor of the service has the mission to communicate with the women and girls who bring their stories to life, confessing shocking detail, stressful circumstances, sometimes the victims threaten the counsellor in an attempt to falsely move the weight from their own shoulders, because they are scared and desperate.

"You can't help either... all I can do now is kill myself..." "the only solution is to kill my son, then kill myself..." "You talk to other people, right? If I kill myself, you're going to be responsible". "If you don't arrest him, I'll turn on the gas and blow up the whole building"

In this position, the counsellor of the Trust Line has to know the psychological portrait of the victim and the aggressor in detail. It takes incredible abilities to be able to work in conditions of stress, empathic involvement, individual approaches, a lot of patience and unconditional acceptance, and the ability to deal with frustrations due to the inability to evaluate the intervention.

All these qualities must be found in the skin and mind of one person. The counsellor of the Trust Line.



Campaigning means mobilisation

Do you remember the first call we ever received, on the 24th of October 2009, on that Saturday afternoon?

"He keeps an axe, or a hammer or other similar objects under the bed he sleeps on... he's asleep now... I'm very scared."

This phone call confirmed what we already knew, which is:


- Although on a declaratory level people condemn violence against women, many pretend not to see or hear it. It is often just accepted, or even when it isn't – no one reacts to violence, even though everyone should as human beings.
- The society is too conservative when it comes to violence, the fear and embarrassment stop women and girls from openly speaking about their problems, difficulties and emotions.
- Domestic violence is considered private business which should be resolved among the family members, and the minimisation of consequences by the professionals could only make it a latent problem.
- The existing infrastructure – which is underdeveloped – the services to be used in cases of violence are only available in certain geographic regions, and are promoted poorly and sporadically. As a consequence, a small number of beneficiaries know about them.
- Practically, there is no interaction between the specialized services – police, medical institutions and social services.

We created the concept and fundamentals for our first awareness campaign on the above-mentioned realities. We have called it simply: "A healthy family is one without violence."



Because it was the first campaign, we have produced and streamed two videos, dividing the activities into two consecutive stages.

We have started 2009 with the affirmation: "You can have a life without fear" and we have emphasized the acknowledgement of the fact that violence does exist, it has a repetitive nature and it affects the society. Every person. To make it understood by everyone, we have put physical violence into spotlight, which is one of the most obvious manifestations of domestic violence, and which can be identified more easily because it leaves marks!



And people started to call us. At first it wasn't many, then the number started growing. Most often, the callers were either women who were suffering from violence, or their relatives, and they were speaking of the physical violence they were dealing with...





"My partner is very violent. I have two daughters, I am pregnant and about to give birth... last night he woke up still drunk and started screaming, throwing everything around. The children were scared. I ran outside. I stayed outside until 3 am. If I tried to come in, the nightmare would start again. The house is mine. I asked him to leave. He doesn't want to..." (N., 33 years).




"He gets violent out of the blue and there's no escape. The children are scared...the in-laws as well, we live together... going to the policeman is a waste of time, he's his "drinking buddy". I've left to stay with my parents many times, or with my sister in the city, but I went back every time. He came, and if apologies were not working, he'd start threatening to kill us all... there is no point in leaving. And I feel sorry for his parents as well, they're scared of him too and he terrorizes them..." (E., 42 years)



"We've been married for 57 years. We both have higher education, management jobs, a big household and three grown up children who moved out already. To punish me, sometimes he took me outside, in the winter, naked and I had to stand there barefoot on the ice...the fence is high so no one can see... because of our status and the fear of what people would say, I just accepted it. When I told the children that I couldn't take it anymore and I wanted to call the police, all three of them told me to just accept it, since I've accepted it all my life. I have diabetes and a few amputated fingers. I need some peace..." (G., 76 years).



"I work in the city, about 20 km away from our village. Me and my son go every day, I want him to go to a good school. My husband doesn't work. He's been beating me from the moment we got married. One time he tried to cut my head off with the meat cleaver, but I had the baby in my arms. Yesterday, at about 10 pm it started again. I ran out of the house with the child, we were both in pyjamas. Towards the morning, after he fell asleep, we sneaked back in and slept on the armchair..." (F., 28 years).



In 2010, we have continued with the message "It is not normal to consider violence a norm". This time we set out even more: to talk about other types of gender-based domestic violence, emphasizing psychological, economic and

social violence, and less so physical violence. We tried to break all existing stereotypes, by including several people and public figures to address the women-victims.

"It is not normal to be controlled on every step... to be told what you can and cannot wear... to have your phone or bag checked or every leu you spend... to be isolated from friends and family... to have to ask for permission to visit your mother... to be scared whenever you have to work late".

We have addressed the people with the voices of the heroes and heroines of our campaign and the voices of the male-aggressors.

"It is not normal to say that a woman unbeaten is like a house un-swept... to humiliate your woman so you can feel like a man... to force her to quit her job... to blame it on the alcohol... or the lack of money... or a bad period in your life... to impose your authority through threats and aggressions... to believe violence is a norm."

This time, we received calls from men too, many of them aggressors in their own families. This is what they have told us, with their voices raised.



"Don't mess with people's heads with your advertisements. The people in your ads don't know what they're talking about..." (I, 50 years).



"She is a snake. She doesn't know her place. You're wrecking families with your nonsense... if he's beaten her, it means he had to..." (O., 36 years)



"I am against physical violence, but your video left me perplexed. I also check my wife's phone. Why are you making such ads? What are you trying to say with it?..." (L., 26 years).



"If the woman does not listen to her man and doesn't obey him, she has to be beaten. The man is her God and what he says is the law. She doesn't have the right to take a step without his knowledge... what kind of communication? I said it is the law... not up for discussion..." (V., 65 years).



In most these calls, the men were aggressively expressing their disagreement with the promoted message, it being perceived as an intrusion into their family life, a violation of men's rights and a conflict starter. They admit that they beat their partners, but consider that their behaviour is justified, "natural" and they consider themselves victims because the abuse is triggered by alcohol consumption, infidelity, disobedience etc.

Other campaigns followed. All of them had a specific message, that approached a particular, lesser known aspect of violence. The most recent "La Strada" campaign from 2017 was the one that had the biggest impact on women, causing emotions bordering pain. The campaign "Domestic violence through the eyes of children" was the HARDEST on us as well. Because this time, CHILDREN have spoken through the voice of Ionel, the main character, telling the public about:

His mum, she is now in hospital.

The doctor who said that there is hope.

His grandma, who said it would be embarrassing if people found out.

The godfather, who said that mum has to just accept it.

The neighbour who hasn't seen or heard anything.

The police officer who wrote on a piece of paper...

In this video, Ionel shows:

The spot where his mum used to sleep so his dad wouldn't find her.

The place where his dad pushed her, and she fell.

And the flowers that he, Ionel, brought his mother, because she put up with so much for his sake!

After streaming the video "Domestic violence through the eyes of children" on TV, we travelled to all 35 districts and cities in Moldova. We invited and put face to face all those who are obliged by law to help Ionel's mother: police

officers, social workers, doctors, teachers, metaphorically represented by the grandparents, neighbours and godparents from the video.

We made this effort because after almost a decade after a special law entered into force, we still tolerate violence and don't get involved. Because many women still continue to put up with their aggressive husbands for the sake of their children, because children deserve "a father", but failing to understand that they suffer just as much. And the short-term and long-term consequences can be very severe. They mark their destinies.

It is our place here to share our understanding of what impact awareness means and why a successful campaign always means mobilisation.

What is streamed on TV, and more recently on the internet, can have a very strong impact on people. The power of social media, sharing information from person to person, from door to door, these are the most popular knowledge tools among the beneficiaries of the Trust Line for Women and Girls. In this regard, the power of mass-media, including online media, is substantial – it forms opinion and attitude streams. And the guiding principle is not to harm.

Why have we insisted to talk about awareness campaigns?

Because they illustrate what the state of the field of prevention and combating violence is and its evolution. The content and messages from the campaign are inspired entirely from the confessions of those who called the Trust Line. And whether a law is functional or not, the beneficiaries would be the best judges!

These human confessions have the power to mobilise a response from: family and friends, the community, the authorities.

Violence against women in the world and at home:

laws and realities

"Hello... I have called you yesterday. You told me about a law that defends me. What kind of law is this? He beat me again. First me then the children. He broke my arm. I went to the police officer who lives not far from us. He told me he'd come and never did. I went to the village social worker too. She spoke to the girls there and that's all. I went to the "district". They said that I don't have enough evidence to get a Protection Order. I have a certificate from the doctor saying that the arm is broken. They said he has rights... don't I?"

A different kind of PROLOGUE

The FIRST Protection Order was issued A YEAR AFTER the law entered into force on the 25th of September 2009.

Officially, this woman was under the protection of this law. But she ended up killed by her husband. Protected as she was... how can we express our feelings into words in this situation...

A moment of silence and condolences.

The entire system that was meant to protect her then has failed!

To better understand why that has happened, we should look at what the situation in the field of domestic violence and violence against women was at the MOMENT the Trust Line service WAS LAUNCHED, in 2009.

General Context

What is happening in the world...

Internationally, there is the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights), elaborated by the Council of Europe in 1950, which entered into force in September 1953. In 1959, in Strasbourg, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, for the first time ever, elects the judges of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), called to examine international lawsuits/cases relevant to the convention, and solve them through binding and final decisions. At that point, the jurisprudence ECHR was already dealing with a few active cases of domestic violence.

A quarter of a century later, in 1979, the United Nations General Assembly adopts the first

and one of the most important documents regarding women's rights – the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, but it does not mention the express term of violence against women. It was only in 1992, through the General Recommendation No. 19 of the CEDAW Committee that violence against women/gender-based violence was recognized as a form of discrimination, falling within the scope.

“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”.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action followed soon after, in 1995, which included eradicating violence against women as a strategic goal among other gender equality requirements. In 2005 the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings was adopted. The Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse followed in 2007, along with recommendations of the Committee of Ministers addressed to the member states of the Council of Europe from 2002 regarding the protection of women against violence. Other documents include the Recommendation on Gender Equality Standards and Mechanisms from 2007 and other recommendations from the Council of Europe and the European Parliament.

All these documents have preceded and prepared the adoption of the most comprehensive and important international treaty that approaches this human right violation – the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. This is better known by the location where the meeting of the Council

In 1993, inspired by this recommendation, the United Nations General Assembly adopts the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. De facto, this declaration has become the basis of international actions regarding violence against women and offered a first complex definition of the phenomenon.

took place – the Istanbul Convention, which was due to be adopted in May 2011.

At present, the Istanbul Convention was signed by 45 out of the 47 member-states of the Council of Europe (except Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation), being ratified by 34 states. The fact that the Republic of Moldova is one of the states that signed is a good thing, but we can't not mention that except Armenia, Moldova was the last state to sign the Convention, on the 6th of February 2017, later on it being ratified.

What is happening in the Republic of Moldova...

At the end of 2001, during the regional information campaign on women's rights “Life without violence”, the level of information of the population on violence against women at home and at her workplace was examined. The findings of the study were more than worrying. They were outrageous.

Thus, the study showed that men and women considered that violence against women is acceptable. The only difference was that the

number of men declaring it was higher. According to the study, other forms of violence were basically not reported, although women mentioned them more often (psychological or economic for example), being considered natural reactions rather than acts of violence.

At the beginning of 2007, at the persistence and with the contribution of the civil society, the Parliament of the RM adopts Law no. 45 regarding the prevention and combating domestic violence.

The law enters into force in September 2008, and it establishes the institutional framework, detailing the tasks of the competent authorities; providing for the creation of rehabilitation centres/services for victims and aggressors, the creation of a mechanism for solving cases of violence and protection for victims of domestic violence, including by issuing Protection Orders and applying disciplinary measures to the aggressor.

After the law entered into force, the national legislation was harmonized, through making legislative changes in the field of domestic violence of the Criminal Code (art. 2011 “Domestic Violence” was introduced), Family Code, Police Law etc.

Thus, the central public authorities specialized in the field were the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Justice.

The central public authority empowered with the elaboration and promotion of prevention and combating policies on domestic violence, and assisting victims and aggressors was the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family (at present – the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection). There was a

Council created to ensure the coordination and collaboration between ministries and other central administrative authorities competent in the field of prevention and combating domestic violence.

Later, in the context of the signing and ratification of the most complex treaty in the field by the Republic of Moldova – the Istanbul Convention – the national legal framework was meant to be harmonized. The Recommendations offered by the Committee for the elimination of discrimination against women from 2013 and other international experts, and the national reports and the studies conducted by the civil society have served as a basis for the new draft law.

This is how law no. 196 from 28.07.2016 came around, it regards the modification and completion of some legal norms in the field of preventing and combating violence. It modifies and completes about 12 normative documents which concern: completing the notion of domestic violence; completing the definition of aggressor; establishing ways to compensate material and moral damage; issuing Emergency Restraining Orders – a temporary protection measure issued by the police after a risk assessment, which ensures the immediate removal of the aggressor from the family household for a period of 10 days; introducing the notion of crisis situation/critical situation; in the cases of domestic violence where a criminal case was started, reconciliation is no longer permitted, and the protection order can be issued without the victim's approval, just based on the police assessment; the victims of domestic violence are offered guaranteed legal assistance from the state and the forensic evaluation is free of charge. The fine, applied as a measure of contravention, has been eliminated, and any injuries, even small ones, can be

punished only through unpaid community work or contravention arrest for 7-15 days.

Who is responsible...

In order to create a special cooperation mechanism that the state structures would use to ensure the protection of human rights, in 2006 the basis of the National Referral System for Assistance and Protection of Victims and Potential Victims of Trafficking (NRS) was built.

In 2008, the Moldovan Parliament adopted the Strategy of the National Referral system for Assistance and Protection of Victims and Potential Victims of Trafficking, and victims of domestic violence are also beneficiaries of this system. The NRS established the partners involved and created the multidisciplinary regional and community teams.

The multidisciplinary team (MDT) was an important and innovative element of the National Referral System. It was an operational unit on local level, which was meant to ensure the inter-sector collaboration between local institutions, aiming to protect victims. The composition of the MDT is flexible, being changed depending on the individual needs of every beneficiary. Usually, the team consists of representatives of the police, social services, medical staff, teachers, and representatives of local public authorities.

The referral of cases within the NRS was done on three levels: community, regional and national. The process of referral was meant to work either way. If the available services on a certain level were insufficient to meet the needs, the beneficiary would be referred to other existing services within the NRS.

At first, MDTs existed only in 30 towns and villages from only 5 districts (Anenii Noi,

Grigoriopol, Rezina, Șoldănești and Vulcănești).

At present, the NRS for Assistance and Protection of Victims and Potential Victims of Trafficking was extended to other districts of the republic, more multidisciplinary teams were created, with staff, and their capacities were consolidated by the trainings they received.

This is what was declared. But de facto, the activities of these multidisciplinary teams leave much to be desired, we will analyse that later.

In 2018, after multiple consultations with civil society representatives, the Government adopted the National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Violence against women and domestic violence for the years 2019-2023.

It is premature to talk about these elements now. But the 41 points describing the situation in the field clearly and honestly define the existing issues.

DE FACTO, the state admits that the previous information campaigns are not enough, and the capacities of the local public administration authorities are reduced, the specialists still have stereotypical perceptions, the access to services for victims is reduced, the response of the health and social systems and police is fragmentary, the aggressors are insufficiently punished, and the cases of sexual violence are not dealt with accordingly.

Specialized services for victims

On a national level, the Centre for Assistance and Protection of victims and potential victims of Trafficking in human beings offers assistance to beneficiaries in crisis situations. It was created in 2001 with the support of the

International Organization for Migration, mission to the Republic of Moldova. In 2008 this was institutionalized through a Government Decision, earning the status of public institution.

Although the centre was under the management of the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family during 2009-2010, 18% of the expenses of the centre were covered from the state budget. Later, the contribution from the Government in financing the centre has increased.

Apart from the centre, in Chisinau and in other towns there were other specialized centres offering services and shelter to victims of domestic violence: PA “Casa Marioarei”, Women’s Law Centre, the Association “PROMO-LEX”, The National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse, The Centre for Family Crisis “Sotis”, the maternal centres from Chisinau, Cahul, Causeni, Drochia and Hincesti.

At the same time, from 2009, in order to ensure territorial coverage and sustainability of the assistance and reintegration programmes, many centres have benefited from state funding.

But still, the eight places that offered shelter to women suffering from domestic violence and their children are insufficiently funded, and the specialized services are underdeveloped. In 2019, there were 177 places offering shelter, compared to the 355 required by European standards.

At the same time, the updated legislation in the field provides for the creation of assistance and counselling centres for aggressors besides the services designed for victims and children.

We admit that it is hard to talk about the evolution of the services, because during the 10 years some centres have either closed or converted their profile due to the lack of funding, and four new ones have opened.

Four daily centres have been opened for intimate partner aggressors (Chisinau, Causeni, Drochia, Ocnita) where they are offered legal, social and psychological services.

You’re wondering about the funding of these services? The law specifies that the state “institutes and provides, within the financial resources allocated/available, the funding of the services of assistance and protection of victims of domestic violence and their children and the aggressors”. One thing we know for sure: financial resources allocated/available are NOT SUFFICIENT.

Because the new legal changes mention the need to institute and maintain a free telephone support service that offers counselling to the callers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, from December 2017, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection sub-contracted International Centre “La Strada” to provide this service nationally through a public procurement contract.

What makes us proud and confident in our strengths and our success is the accreditation certificate that we obtained in 2019. We’ll cite its full name if you allow us: Accreditation Certificate no. 0001246 from the 5th of December 2019, issued by the National Council for the accreditation of social service providers, Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection.

Who are the beneficiaries of the Trust Line?

At this point we already know what the situation is from a legal and institutional point of view, which means it is time we turn to what is most important: the people, our beneficiaries.

10 years of the Trust Line for Women and Girls in figures
18.683 calls registered by the Trust Line, **644** of which were **from children**.

15.738 calls were from women!

11.852 people have asked for support, information, and guidance in domestic violence situations.

270 people have asked for support in situations of sexual violence.

5.393 have confessed that they have called the Trust Line because they hoped to find an answer to all their questions.

1.168 people wanted to find out what domestic violence is, or what the Trust Line does, or they were journalists asking for a collaboration with “La Strada”.

1.407 cases required emergency interventions in crisis situations.

499 consultations were given to professional groups (police officers, social workers, doctors and teachers).

In 10 years, the Trust Line was called by:

- **8.152 women and 243 men** – victims of domestic violence.

- **183 male aggressors and 17 female aggressors**.
- **2.332 women** who are relatives or friends of victims of domestic violence and **425 men** who were relatives, or acquaintances of the victims.
- **355 female members** of various professional groups, usually social workers or doctors, and **144 male members** of professional groups, usually police officers or mayors.

Also:

- **78 women and a man** – victims of sexual violence.
- **99 women and 30 men** spoke to us about the sexual abuse that their relatives or friends have experienced.
- **57 representatives of professional groups** (police, prosecutors, social workers or doctors) have requested the help of “La Strada” in cases of sexual violence.

Why have we insisted on the women/men formula?

Because we wanted to confirm once more, that when we talk about things such as domestic or sexual violence, at least from the perspective of the Trust Line calls, this is what the picture looks like:

- **97% of victims of domestic violence are WOMEN.**
- **99% of victims of sexual violence are WOMEN.**
- **8 out of 10 people who report a case of violence are WOMEN.**

In the 10 years of activity of the Trust Line for Women and Girls, the thousands of stories and confessions that we heard gave us enough information to describe the profile of the women subjected to violence and the profile of the aggressors. Our intention with this diary was to follow the evolution of the phenomenon. We can only confirm the conclusions of several studies and specialised research in the field.

Do victims or aggressors in the Republic of Moldova have a profile? We ask ourselves. No, there isn't! Violence doesn't happen because we are poorer, it has no connection to our social status. It is a behaviour that, sadly, is passed from generation to generation. The defining element is in fact the general attitude of acceptance or rejecting the idea of resorting to violence. This attitude is then accepted and supported by other factors: violence in the origin family, patriarchal organization, alcohol or drug abuse, financial dependence or co-dependence.

Forms of domestic violence

From the perspective of the Trust Line, we believe that however many awareness campaigns we run to inform about the diversity of the forms of violence, the most reported type of violence is physical violence (80%), followed in a much smaller proportion by psychological violence

(13%). Women speak very little about sexual violence as an aspect of domestic violence (3%). This is not because it is not perceived as violence, but because "it's so intimate, so personal, so shameful".

Who is the victim of domestic violence?

The victim of domestic violence is typically a woman, born in a village or city, who had a mixed childhood – happy and not so much, because her father, when he got angry, was beating her mother. And to escape the beatings they would run, hide in places where they wouldn't be found. They know which of the neighbours or relatives would let them stay the night. The girl knew that she had to wait it out, because "it'll pass".

The years have passed, the girl becomes a woman, gets married to the man she loves. She lives in the village or in the city. She is married or lives with her partner, she is between 27 and 40 years old, she is a mother to two children, she works, but the money she earns is little. If she adds her salary to her husband's, it's just about enough. Their house is small, but it's theirs. She sometimes thinks she's happy, but sometimes she doesn't, because her husband, like her dad, beats her when he gets angry. Like her father would beat her mother. But she knows that she must run away, she takes the children with her, like her mother did with her. She knows that she has to accept it, just like her mother did, because "in his good moments, he was a great father, and children need both



their parents. She must be careful not to provoke him, to accept it, because it happens... it's normal, it happens in every family".

At her 60th anniversary her children will come to wish her happy birthday. They will intentionally not acknowledge her bruises and the sad face, they won't bring up the phone conversation they had earlier when she told them that she can't take it anymore, but if she could put up with it until now, she should keep putting up with it...

Normality vs shame.

According to official statistical data, when women are asked why they don't report violence situations, 45% of victims claim that they can solve their problems themselves, while 40% name SHAME as a reason.

On one hand, our society tolerates violence, considers it a normality, but on the other hand, they find it embarrassing to talk about what happens to you or to your family. But if it is "normal", why are people embarrassed? Is it a normal, natural behaviour that shouldn't provoke the feeling of embarrassment? Because we are not embarrassed to walk hand in hand on the street. So perhaps the society is embarrassed of the way those around would react?

But why do women put up with the violence and don't leave?

This is the most frequently asked question by the beneficiaries notifying us of cases of violence, journalists in interviews, police officers during seminars, young people during information activities.

Because it is hard to understand...

What do the victims say?

"I am SCARED that the aggressor will hurt me or the children. He said he would TAKE THE CHILDREN. Maybe he will change in time... my sister thinks so... I want to have a family, my parents say we should keep the family united. My mother says this is the destiny of women, to ACCEPT. The relatives don't want to get involved, the god-parents don't want to either. I feel sorry for him because he had a tough childhood, he doesn't have a job, and the children are scared we'll get divorced. My father said he can't take me in with the children, they don't have the space, and besides, children should have a father and be raised in a family. The children are attached to their father and choose to stay with him. I worked this household all my life. How can I just leave it behind. There's no point in changing anything. He said he'd set fire to the house. I don't have another home and I won't be able to manage financially. When he is sober, he's a great man. And I'm too old to change anything anyway".

What do the aggressors say?

"She provokes me. It is normal to beat her from time to time. She is responsible for taking care of the household and the children, these are her duties and she must do them well. The wife must be obedient, that's what the priest says in church. How else would I show that I'm the man in this household? She found someone. She sleeps with every man in the village. She sleeps with the police officer too".

What do the people say?

"She likes it. Otherwise she wouldn't stay. She's stupid... maybe she's into masochism. Who's going to want her with two children? It means she's fine with the way things are. And where would she go?"

What do experts and research in the field say?

Several studies and experts have tried to answer this question. Specialized literature has tens, hundreds, thousands of titles that offer an explanation. We won't go on too much about this, only from the perspective of our beneficiaries, even though they don't acknowledge or verbalize this.

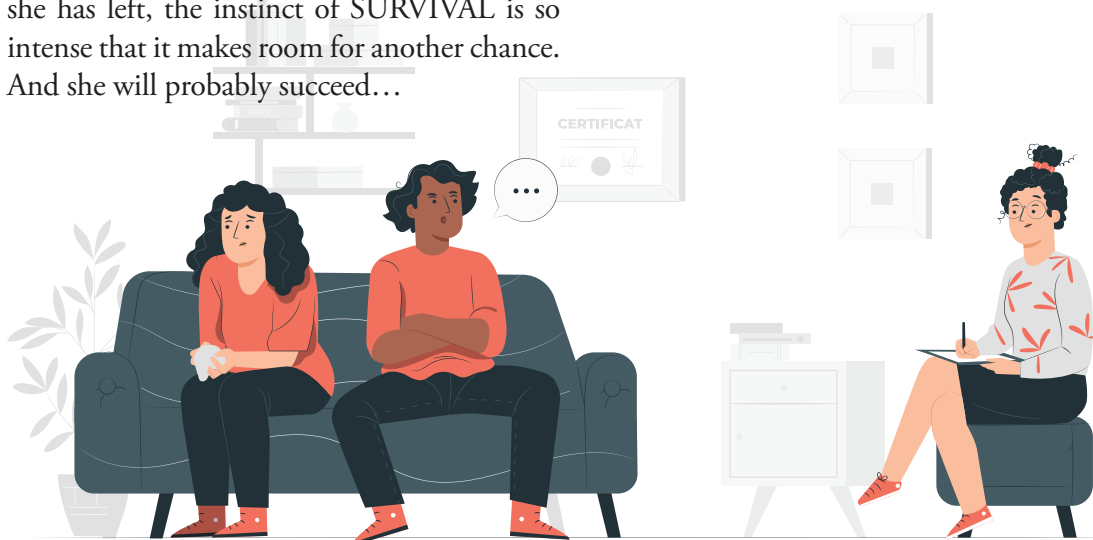
There are two perspectives here: economic and psychological. And only two possibilities: to stay or to leave.

Women want the nightmare to stop. How? At first, by confronting him, giving him another chance, leaving. He becomes more active, makes an effort to bring her back. She comes back because she still loves him and all the other reasons that women have mentioned earlier in this diary. After the woman returns home, the threats and intimidations continue. She lives in constant stress. Her will disappears, she is undecided, he explains to her why he beats her... She tries to escape, she looks for help, calls the Trust Line, but even after she is presented with ways to escape, her state of helplessness will make any action futile. This is when FEAR intervenes – the only emotion she has left, the instinct of SURVIVAL is so intense that it makes room for another chance. And she will probably succeed...

"If I hadn't gotten the neurologic treatment, I would have ended up in Costiujeni (psychiatric hospital). I couldn't eat. Whenever I saw a knife on the table, my stomach would feel tight... from fear. I still feel a knife in my back and how he's chopping me into bits. Like he said he would many times. This fear never passed. I heard him on the phone yesterday and my soul left my body. I am so afraid, and not just for myself, but also for my daughter and granddaughter who I've escaped to..."

This is what symptoms a victim presents: aboulia, helplessness, Stockholm Syndrome, developing post-traumatic stress and depression.

If we add that the victim and the aggressor have one home, or they rent together, her salary isn't big, she's pregnant again or is on maternity leave... and the other children need to be fed and dressed, the child still loves his father and doesn't want to stay in a rented place with mouldy walls, the loan they took is under her name – many reasons **WHY THE VICTIM DOESN'T LEAVE!**



Cyber-violence

through the lens of the Trust Line

Almost all families from Moldova have relatives or friends who work abroad or even settled there. It so happens that the phenomenon of migration and all the negative effects that it brings have contributed and facilitated the access to computers, mobile phones and the Internet.

In the Republic of Moldova 90% of the population has access to the Internet, thus securing a top position in the world. Moreover, Moldova is in the Top 5 countries with cheapest Internet on the Globe. The number of users of mobile internet has increased to 1.5 million, meaning

that occurrence of cyber-violence incidents is understandable. This means that aggressors now have even more ways of manipulating and constraining victims, through using information technology. In 90% of cases this involves the aggressor blackmailing the victim that he would post photos of an intimate character on social media or send them to relatives if the victim refuses to continue the relationship.

Our worry is that the number of cyber-violence cases will explode, and we need to have a prompt and efficient response for when this happens.

"I was visiting a neighbour. It was his birthday, and he gave me some cognac. I don't remember anything after that. The next day he showed me indecent photos of me. He forced me to have sexual relations with him, saying he'd show the photos to everyone in the village. People found out anyway, he posted the photos. That's when the nightmare started, his wife calls me, swears whenever she sees me, and the village just laughs..."

"My ex-boyfriend is threatening me. He posted naked photos on the internet. I blocked him, but he started to create profiles with my name on social networks and upload photos of me. I am embarrassed because everyone has seen the photos".

"I want to break up with him, but I can't because he threatens to post intimate pictures of me on the internet. He already posted one yesterday".

"My 16 year old daughter met a boy. He found a photo on her phone in which she's only wearing underwear. When she asked him to delete it, he said the worst is yet to come. He forced her to hug him, kiss him and take more pictures. The photos started appearing on different accounts on the internet indicating her name, college she studies at and where to find her".



"He created several Facebook accounts with my name, sent a friend request to all my friends and mutual acquaintances and posted photos of us having sexual relations. There have been three profiles like that. Even though they've been blocked now, he threatens to post videos with the same content".

What happens if the husband is a foreign citizen or the beneficiaries are abroad?

We have mentioned previously the phenomenon of migration, and the National Statistics Bureau states that almost a million citizens of the Republic of Moldova are abroad. Citizens leave for work at first, but many decide to settle there, get married there or take their whole family with them because they want a better life.

The Trust Line for Women and Girls is a national service that, unfortunately, cannot offer direct assistance to the citizens of Moldova who are abroad. But we are still contacted and asked for help and support. We do manage to refer these cases to competent services even though they are limited. But we have requested the intervention of authorities and monitoring the evolution.

Most often we are notified by the relatives or friends of the victim about either Moldovan women married to foreign citizens or a Moldovan couple living abroad.

Are there trends? Of course, most situations refer to the neighbouring countries Romania and Ukraine, but also other countries that many Moldovans have migrated to, such as Russia, Turkey, Italy, France, or Spain.

The rest are singular cases – Moldovans from over 30 countries have requested informational support: Greece, Slovakia, Macedonia, Czech Republic, Poland, Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium, Great Britain, Sweden, Norway, Australia, USA, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Egypt, Libya, Nepal, Palestine, Mongolia, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Syria, Iran, Israel and China.

Is there a profile of the violence in these cases? Except the fact that they are more vulnerable, there is not!

In all the cases, the husband imposed power and control, especially through economic means, but also by applying physical force. Often, women subjected to violence were financially dependent of the husbands, they didn't have their own place and they didn't have the necessary support from relatives or friends. They had the intention to leave, but the lack of support and resources didn't allow her to leave. In most the situations involving Moldovan couples, the women are often without documents and incomes, many of them are locked in their homes, without the possibility to contact anyone.



Italy

"I worked for two weeks, then he took my passport and phone and he's refusing to give them back. The beatings, blackmail, threats, screams and shouts are a regular. He says if run away to Moldova, he'll come and kill me".



Israel

"One time, the neighbour called the police. He looked at me, told me that I was at his home and I was a stranger. When the police came, I said that I fell".



Czechia

"My daughter is living in a nightmare. I know that he beat her yesterday. She managed to grab her passport and run. But now I can't reach her".



Egypt

"My husband threw me out, but he didn't let me take the child. Said the child needs him, not me".



Iran

"My husband forbids me to work. I am in the house all day with my two children. I don't have any money. He often brings other women. And locks us in the bathroom. And I can't tell him anything".



Spain

"My sister gave birth 4 years ago. The boy doesn't even have a birth certificate. The husband always beats her. He locks her in while he's at work. My only way to contact her is through her neighbour, who she can talk to from the balcony. But the neighbour hasn't seen her in two days."



Germany

"I'm 35 years old and I already have 5 children. He keeps me in the house all the time. He said I'm going to stay at home and give birth to as many children as he wants".



Turkey

"My husband is Muslim, and I am Christian. He is very violent... now more so with my older daughter, he threatens to kill all our family if she doesn't convert to Islam".

What makes these women more vulnerable? CHILDREN.

Children are often used as “currency”, or they are the main blackmailing element that aggressors use to subdue their wives.

THEN... the woman is in a foreign country, legally or illegally, barely speaking the local language, without a stable place to live, all her relatives are far away, but they expect her to send them money. Her husband is violent, but he is a familiar face among strangers, her children are born in this foreign country, making them citizens *jus soli*... BUT you can't leave this country with the children unless you have

the father's approval... her CHANCE to escape without outside help is very small, and the MISSION to help is hard but not IMPOSSIBLE.

It is hard to manage cases like this because the tools we can use in the Republic of Moldova cannot be applied outside the country. The beneficiaries are far from us, meaning we don't have a direct connection with them. Only 17 women-victims of violence have contacted us directly in the 10 years. Usually, it is the relatives who call, waiting specific help, but often we can't even provide information straight away, because every country has their own legislation in the field.

Evaluating the situation takes time, which is often frustrating.

But we still take action to try and help them.



Children first!

"Hello! My father beat my mother. I wasn't at home. Two women from the village saw. When I came, mother was covered in blood. I called the ambulance. They took her to the hospital, her eye was punctured. Dad always beats us when he drinks. We're scared to stay at home..."

In the 10 years of activity of the Trust Line, 8541 victims of domestic violence were identified, 1241 of them were children-victims. 998 of them are victims of their parents or guardians, and 243 of them are victims along their mothers. 13400 children live and are raised in a family where there is domestic violence, either being indirect victims or victims of violence.

In reality, the number of these children is much higher!

Victims of domestic violence are both girls and boys, with ages between five (the youngest caller we registered) and 18 years, children who've been exposed to physical, psychological or sexual abuse from their father or both their parents, brother, grandparents or guardian.

Beatings, punishments, insults, intimidations, forbidding the child from doing activities that are beneficial for his development – all to impose authority on the child. The requests for help come from neighbours, representatives of professional groups, members of the extended family or from the underage victims themselves.

Many children-victims of domestic violence come from dis-organized families where one parent is not present (deceased, divorced, or

working abroad/in a different town), and if there a step-parent, the risk of abuse increases.

Attitudes such as “my dad used to beat me and he made a man out of me” or “I made you, I’m going to kill you” add to the tense environment that these children grow in.

Unfortunately, most women that are involved in a violent relationship only acknowledge the danger of the violence that they are facing when the manifestations of the children awaken parent responsibility in them. Only when the children say “if I were you, I’d have left a long time ago” or when they beg her to leave.

The number of children-witnesses is higher than the number of children-victims. If we consider the trans-generational nature of violence, it turns out that violence MULTIPLIES because the number of potential victims and aggressors increases. This is just because it is thought that children need both their parents, or that “in his good moments, he’s a good father”.

What does a person who suffered from sexual abuse feel?

We launched the Trust Line exclusively as a service for victims of domestic violence. But from the first year of activity, we have been asked to help in cases of sexual violence.

If beneficiaries called us about other issues except violence, we knew where to direct them to, but with sexual crimes, we couldn't do that! Because at that point in time, there were no services in the Republic of Moldova dedicated exclusively to victims of sexual violence.

In these conditions, we needed to know what the situation was in the field de facto. From 2015, we have conducted studies, organized workshops and trainings, but also awareness campaigns to mobilize the public opinion and actions. This way, in 2018 we have extended the mandate of the Trust Line for Women and Girls to listen, help and offer support in cases of sexual violence.

It may seem that 270 calls that concern cases of sexual violence is not a high number. This is true, but for every person who called, this was important, vital, a matter of life and death...

This is because:

- 60% of victims of sexual crimes DON'T report the cases to the police, and those who do hardly get justice.
- The justice system is not the friendliest, in some cases it is hostile even.
- BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY, the tens of confessions of the people who suffered a rape made us understand how difficult it is for them to talk about it.
- Psychologists, sociologists, forensic experts, lawyers, doctors, human rights defenders – they all have contributed by writing, explaining who the victims of sexual violence are, how they feel about

the trauma, how their memory works in this scenario or about the impact of the abuse. They have spoken about myths versus truth, fought stereotypes, published statistical data and analysed the response of the justice system.

The confessions of our victims have guided our activities.



The abuse



“He said that after he eats, he’ll come and lie down next to me. I told him no. He insisted. I didn’t understand much back then. He laid down next to me. He started pulling me closer, kissing me, taking my pyjamas off. When I tried to scream, he covered my mouth with his hand, and twisted my hands behind my back. He did his thing. He said that if I told anyone, he’d take me to the woods, tie one leg to one tree, the other to another, so the wild animals eat me alive. I haven’t told anyone about it.” (Girl, 15 years, about the guardians’ son).



“I was sure I won’t get out alive, that I will die that night, in that apartment. I tried to get him talking, I was telling him that if he loves me, we should go for a walk, anything to get out. I was crying very loudly and asking for help, but he didn’t react in any way...” (Woman, 30 years, kidnapped and raped).



“At first, he was nice to me. He gave me two lei and showed me where the shop was. He was good at the beginning, then he started beating my mother, shouting at us. One night I was sleeping but woke up because the bed was shaking. He was on top of me. I woke up my mother and told her what happened. She told me she’ll talk to him tomorrow and turned to sleep on the other side. I’m scared of him, he said he’ll cut my throat if I tell anyone else.” (Girl, 13 years, about her stepfather).



“I was so devastated that I asked my neighbour to take care of my goat, I was ready to give up my garden too, but I thought I’d be left without food. I haven’t worked the garden in that period anyway, that’s why I didn’t have any harvest... when the sun starts setting, I feel scared and uneasy. When a stranger comes to my gate, I feel tightness in my chest...” (Woman, 45 years, moderate mental retardation, the goat was her family).

The response of the justice system



“I was surrounded by four male policemen. I was embarrassed to talk about all the details of that night. It was an interrogation, and they were asking questions that were irrelevant to the case, I had no more strength to be there.” (Woman, 19 years, raped by a policeman).



“I felt humiliated. I asked to be examined by a female gynaecologist, but they said that they don’t care for the whims of everyone coming in, and it is my fault that I went God-knows-where and now they have to work.” (Girl, 17 years, lives only with her grandma).



“I filed a complaint to the police. The hardest thing for me was to go to the place where it happened and tell what happened step by step. After a week, they called me to the office and said that what I told them does not sound like rape at all, that I wanted it, and that it is my fault that I went there...” (Woman, 23 years, wants to be believed).



“The people from the prosecutor’s office told me I should withdraw my complaint and calm down, that life doesn’t end here. They kept explaining to me that it’s not worth ruining a person’s life for one night. That’s how I found out he was married and had a child. But who’s thinking about my life? (Woman, 26 years, gave up and left the country).

The impact of the abuse and how is the life of the victim after the abuse



"I used to have beautiful long hair. After the rape, the first thing I did was dye my hair and cut it very short. I don't dress like a woman anymore. I wear manly clothes. I dress like that, so no one notices me. I don't wear makeup and I don't do my hair. I don't wear skirts, or low-cut tops..." (Woman, 25 years, doesn't think she'll ever get married).



"When the workers of the placement centre took me to the gynaecologist, I'd start shaking... when they tried to touch... there... I once kicked a doctor. Even now I find it very hard to go to the gynaecologist..." (Girl, 15 years, orphan).



"I wake up at any sound, sometimes I get up to find out what the sound is. I was thinking to sleep with a knife under my pillow, but my friend said that'd be dangerous, and I should take a fork instead..." (Woman, 32 years, taken by the ambulance after an attempted suicide following sexual abuse).



"It is true that after that night I find it very hard for my husband to touch me. I often feel a huge discomfort when being intimate with him. I sometimes ask him not to touch me, or to postpone it for another day..." (Woman, 26 years, pregnant at the time of the abuse).



"I stayed at home for a week, lying on my tummy. I can't remember what I was thinking about. I don't even know if I was thinking about anything... I knew that I didn't want anyone to come into my room. During that time, only dad came in, once, he laid down next to me, told me it'll pass and that everything will be fine again. Mum never came in. It hurt her too much, and she was scared she'll cry again..." (Student(girl), 18 years, virgin. It happened on Christmas, she doesn't celebrate Christmas anymore).



"I managed to have a relationship only after 12 years. Whenever he'd try something, I'd start shaking, my eyes would get bigger, as if I had a monster on top of me... I'm still scared that it will hurt. I am calmer now, but some things I can't change. My boyfriend would like it if I wore a dress from time to time, wore makeup, did my hair. I can't do it. It would mean provoking men. I don't want to do that! I'll never make myself beautiful."

What does a person who suffered from sexual abuse feel, besides guilt, shame and disappointment?

She feels PAIN. Not necessarily physical pain. The thought that her mother, father, sister, brother would find out is unbearable. Their pain hurts... she doesn't want anyone's PITY. They may or may not support her, may or may not understand her... BUT, it will definitely not be a subject to discuss with other

relatives. Moreover, they will PREFER TO FORGET, SUPPRESS what happened, hope that the victim will not talk about it either. Even after many years, they will never bring up the subject and she will never find out what they think about it. Even if she attempts to talk about it, the relatives won't entertain the discussion because they don't know what to say or how to act. This is why she chooses a person from outside her family to be a resource-person. That person will accompany her



to the doctor,
less often to the
police, because...

responsible
for what hap-
pened to her?

We come back to the PAIN!

Even if the girl or woman chooses to go to the police, the probability that the feeling of guilt and shame will intensify is very big, because she will be asked whether or not she consumed alcohol, what she was doing there at that hour, what clothes she was wearing and how much makeup she was wearing.

It gets even sadder after that. She gets asked about previous sexual encounters, who with, how often, why she didn't resist or why she didn't call for help. If she wasn't held down, why didn't she run away. And finally: was it not obvious what he wanted and how it will all end? Doesn't she think that she is the one

And THEN, the person who suffered from a sexual abuse understands that there is a low chance that she will ever get justice. Some of them accept the financial compensation that is offered to them at least.

P.S. RECONCILIATION will not be permitted in cases of a sexual character. Even if the victim, reconciles with the criminal, he will still be criminally liable for his actions. This is a draft law elaborated by the Ministry of Justice at the proposal of a working group coordinated by International Centre "La Strada". This draft law is crucial not only for us, but also for many professionals in the field of ensuring the rule of law and justice. But this is still a draft law.

...as HUMAN BEINGS

29 August 2010, 15:25

"Hello! I am a teacher in the village and my husband is the village police inspector. He is very violent to me and our daughters, physically and psychologically. Two years ago, I filed for divorce, but the judge convinced me to withdraw, I hoped he would change. Now we are divorcing again. He's just as aggressive. I even asked the district police commissioner for help, but after that my husband became even more aggressive, he's sure no one can punish him".

We have spoken to the teacher many times.

She told us about how she went to the district prosecutor's office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, how the punishment he got was a 200 lei fine (10 euros), how he "beats her less, but insults and humiliates her more", how the vice-commissioner came to her workplace, how she was called into the headmaster's office, and how he blamed her for the husband's behaviour in front of the headmaster, how she felt ashamed that they spoke about things that were too personal, too intimate.

We stop here, even if there is much more to say. We will tell you how it ended though...

European Court of Human Rights. Strasbourg. Cause Eremia, citizen of the Republic of Moldova.

28th of May 2013. The Decision is Final. The respondent state is to pay, within three months, 15000 euros for non-pecuniary damage and 2150 euros for costs.

This was the FIRST conviction of the Republic of Moldova at ECHR for domestic violence. This happened because:

- What happened to the woman is nothing else but torture, she was treated inhumanely, discriminated based on her gender.
- The state knew what was happening to her and didn't do anything. On the contrary, the state blamed her for not forgiving him, accepting him, and loving him enough.
- The children-witnesses of domestic violence suffer from psychological trauma and the state has the duty to defend them.
- The status of the aggressor in the system makes the victim even more vulnerable, and the actions of the state should have been even more categorical.

The best feedback about how functional a law is or how accessible services are is given by the people who the law was elaborated for and intends to protect. In the case of the Trust Line, the best feedback is from the victims of domestic and sexual violence!

Official data, which is also confirmed by "La Strada" statistics shows that only 2 out of 10 victims request help from the police (20%), but the experience the victims had with the justice and social system is very important for improving the legal framework.

Why only 2 out of 10?

Do you remember at the beginning of the diary we were talking about the fact that the Trust Line is perceived as a service similar to the emergency services, but it is NOT the police, neither the ambulance, nor the fire fighters. We were saying that the calls from our beneficiaries show fear and tears, but they also emphasize the low amount of trust that the population has in the authorities and services intended to help them and defend their interests. We were saying that there are many reasons, and we will come back to them. We are coming back to that promise now.

Imagine you have a neighbour who is constantly beaten by her husband, and when he started hitting the children as well, she couldn't take it anymore and called 112...

The police came. Entered the house. Filled in a report. They took the aggressor to the side. They talked. Told him it would be good if he paid the fine within 24 hours. The police officers left. The aggressor went back into the house and the screams of the victim are even louder now... for many years, in 7 out of 10 cases, the punishment for the aggressor was either just a fine, or a verbal reprimand.

OR... the police officer told the woman that she has to go to the district to be examined and come to him the next day. He took the aggressor in the car with him and left. The aggressor comes back in a few hours and the screams are even louder... even if a protection order is issued, monitoring its execution and supervising the measures indicated by it is usually left to the victim, who doesn't know the limits of the execution or how she should react.

OR... the police officer filled in the report. He asked the woman multiple questions. He took the aggressor to the side. He told him to grab a toothbrush, some clothes, his documents, took his keys and told him that he has to leave the household. He explained to the aggressor that because he abused his wife, he has no right to come close to her, or call her for 10 days. The aggressor left, but not very far. He waited until the police officer left so he could come back. He returned to the house and the screams of the neighbour are even louder now... the son of the victim tried to call the police officer – that's what they were told to do – but no one picked up... the emergency restraining order is a tool that the police has asked for, justifying it to be expanding the limits of their mandate, but now they often forget to put it to use.

OR... by the time police came, the aggressor ran away. She was left behind with the children. The police told her to go to the mayor's office the next day. She went. He said he was busy and that she should return to her husband, and that she "shouldn't have had children with him if she knew what he was like" and that the day he receives visitors is Monday... the social worker who was passing by said that she's busy, she has to "weigh the sugar" and said the victim should be grateful she offered her financial support... In cases when there are underage children involved, the local public authorities have the most important role, because they have guardianship over the life and well-being of the children in such situations.

These are not made-up scenarios either. They are confessions of women we have spoken to. And they were not singular cases. There have been approx. 2000 cases, and that's only the women who had the strength to call and tell us.

How likely do you think it is that you would call the police when you need help after seeing how your neighbour was “helped”?

Not likely! There is no TRUST at all.

BUT, in 10 years we understood that in every field, the HUMAN FACTOR is essential. Over the years, we have spoken to many honest policemen, mayors who are keen to get involved, responsible social workers, who have done all within their power to help, sometimes outside of their mandate, and despite the fact that their salary did not cover these actions, and that their working conditions were not the best. They did it because they were HUMAN.

When we started to write this two-part diary, in Geneva, the 75th Session of the UN Committee for eliminating all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) was taking place. The Republic of Moldova took part as

well, and representatives of the civil society, including members of International Centre “La Strada” members were there. During the informal reunion subjects such as the insufficient investigation of domestic violence and sexual violence cases, the limited access to judicial services free of charge, rather kind punishments for aggressors, but also about the need to adjust the national normative framework and the ratification of the Istanbul Convention.

We will stop here, but not without ADHERING to all the findings of the last alternative report from CEDAW and other similar studies in the field in the name of OUR BENEFICIARIES, with the VOICES used to write this anniversary diary!



END OF DIARY

Our aim was not to offer shocking statistical data. We understand that other services could have higher numbers. But in cases of dramatic phenomena such as domestic violence and sexual violence – whatever the number is, it is a HIGH number. Even if it is only one person or one child who had to suffer, it is very sad...

But unfortunately, the number of victims is in the order of THOUSANDS...

Our intention is not to make people cry or gasp, but to determine actions so that women and girls who have requested help from the Trust Line get JUSTICE. As much as possible. Maybe even more than possible.

We are not dramatizing or exaggerating. We know that we can't produce an immediate change, particularly in the mentality of the society. We just want women to be heard, understood, not judged, but helped.

WHAT DO WE WANT?

- >> We want every person who has ever suffered from an abuse – to know that there is someone – a person or an organization – that will understand how hard it is, how scared she/he is, and will do everything to help.
- >> We want every person who knows of someone who suffers from domestic or sexual violence to be more empathic, not judge and become a resource-person who the people around need so much.
- >> We want every police officer, social worker, doctor, teacher, mayor, jurist, prosecutor, judge or priest reading this diary to do their job honestly, despite material shortages, despite their modest pay, despite their own attitudes and values, acting in the name of justice.

For many of us, our home is the place where we feel safe. Hearing the key turn in the lock should *ONLY* bring feelings of happiness and excitement, and not a fear of the husband or partner coming home.

Homes full of happiness, where the happiness can be seen through the windows, and hidden things – pain, violence – will not be found however hard you look...



