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INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

## WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS formulated at the EU Seminar

# “HIDDEN VIOLENCE IS A SILENT RAPE: PREVENTION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST REFUGEES IN EUROPE”

14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2008  
Het Pand, Ghent, Belgium



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# INTRODUCTION

At the EU Seminar “Hidden Violence is a Silent Rape: Prevention of Gender-based Violence against Refugees in Europe”, on February 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> 2008 at “Het Pand” in Ghent, Belgium, 8 workshops were held.

All workshops started from a human rights- and gender-perspective aiming at prevention. Every workshop was introduced by two key note speakers presenting a good practice in Europe.

The first four workshops addressed good practices in support and care for victims and offenders of sexual and gender-based violence practice:

1. Law, Rights & Police
2. Sexual exploitation
3. Health Care after Sexual and Gender-based Violence
4. Male Abuse(d)

The second four workshops addressed good practices in prevention of sexual and gender-based violence:

5. Empowerment in Prevention
6. Community Participation in Prevention & Care
7. Intercultural Help-Lines in Prevention & Care
8. Awareness Raising in Prevention

After the presentation of good practices, a discussion was held and recommendations were formulated for the topic of the workshop. The recommendations covered policy, structural and service recommendations. A summary of these recommendations was presented as a Call for action to the 150 Seminar participants and to a panel of European and national policy makers at the last day of the Seminar.

This Seminar was part of the European research project “Prevention of sexual and gender-based violence against refugees in Europe: a participatory approach”. Funded by the EC Daphne Program, this project was steered by Belgian (Coordinator: International Centre for Reproductive Health-University Ghent, Partners: Nederlandstalige Vrouwenraad and ZIJNvzw), Dutch (MOVISIE, Pharos) and British (TandemCom) research bodies and organizations active in the field of gender-based violence, women rights or health of refugees. At the seminar the participatory approach in this project, the research results and the prevention tool were presented, workshops were given and a Café Contact for networking among EU partners and community researchers was held. Designs for the prevention tool made by respondents, quotes and passages from the in-depth interviews as well as the Villa De Bondt collection “Migration in Jewels in Migration” were exhibited. The EU Seminar “Hidden Violence is a Silent Rape: Prevention of Gender-based Violence against Refugees in Europe”, was funded by the EU Daphne and the Belgian National Lottery.



# SUMMARY WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS (as presented on February 15<sup>th</sup>)

## Policy recommendations:

- Human rights obligations of EU & MS governments towards asylum seekers and undocumented migrants must be upheld:
  - Right to work legally
  - Right to study: higher education too
  - Right to receive health care: more than emergencies
- There's a need for a common EU policy on migration, asylum and violence prevention
- Implement ICPD Cairo & Beijing + Action Plans for sexual & reproductive health and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) prevention
- Embed participation of refugees/asylum seekers in:
  - Development of policy at all levels
  - Development & delivery of services
- Empowerment needed
- Make participation a criterion of:
  - Funding
  - Good practice

## Structural recommendations:

- Raise awareness among:
  - Host community & Refugees/AS/UM
  - All ages
  - Men/women: perpetrators & victims
- Through: Different Media & Locations
- On a range of topics:
  - Sexual Health, Rights & SGBV
  - Countries of origins, migration
  - Rights & procedures
- In appropriate languages
- Networks + Collaborative research + Sharing of knowledge & good practice:
  - Multisectoral
  - Multidisciplinary
  - From grassroots to senior policy level

## Service recommendations:

- Service provision:
  - Diversity & cultural awareness
  - Partnership working
  - Community involvement
  - Flexibility



- Respect
- Multi-lingual
- Targeted approaches to the hard to reach
- Support & training for staff & volunteers
- Role of reception centres:
  - Dialogue about role/existence of centres
  - Safe places for women/men/children
  - Involvement of residents in policy making
  - Support & training professionals
  - Information & meaningful activities for residents
  - Sexual & reproductive health
  - Sexual & Gender-based Violence
- Prevention & Care:
  - Developed gender-focused prevention: male & female!
  - Develop effective treatment options for perpetrators
  - Safe places regardless of immigration status
  - Adequate resources/funding
  - Cooperation between different services as police, health & social workers, policy makers, ngos, cbos, ...

Recommendations:

- Extensive list in final report
- Overview on [www.icrh.org](http://www.icrh.org) (from March 2008 onwards)
- Lobbying at all levels
- EN-HERA!: European network for promotion of Sexual & Reproductive Health of Refugees, Asylum Seekers & Undocumented Migrants in Europe & Beyond : see [www.icrh.org](http://www.icrh.org)



# WORKSHOP 1: LAW, RIGHTS & POLICE

**Chair:** Aintzane de Aguirre, UNHCR, Belgium

**Speakers :** Katrine Camilleri, Jesuit Refugee Service, Malta

Tanja Windbüchler, Intervention Centre against Domestic Violence, Austria

*Increased gender sensitivity when designing law, policy and practice*

## **Policy Recommendations:**

- Need for a common and coherent European migration and SGBV policy with respect for the highest possible standards
- Instruments at different levels should recognize rights and overcome barriers to enjoy rights
- Implement Austrian model in other countries provided that conditions are fulfilled (e.g. barring order, cf. presentation Tanja Windbüchler)
- Honor crimes should be considered as a reason to obtain refugee status
- Ensuring that all are able to live in dignity

## **Structural Recommendations:**

- Provision of effective means of redress
- Training of law enforcement officials and all involved in reception of migrants
- Training of case workers in asylum procedure to change perception / mentality towards asylum seekers
- Collaboration and independence between police and social services
- More outreach services / help-lines for migrants to raise awareness in a language migrants understand
- More proactively inform migrants in their own language, provide information on rights and legal issues, health care, social assistance, how police functions in host country in order to increase feeling of safety (e.g. through integration courses)
- Training in centers and schools on relations, how to live together, exchange of experience

## **Service Recommendations:**

- Guaranteeing basic needs of migrants to prevent SGBV
- Shorten stay in reception centers and asylum procedure (6 months to max. 1 year)
- Access to social services even if undocumented
- Regular permit for victims regardless of willingness to cooperate
- More intervention programs for offenders
- Shelters for victims of violence:
  - There should be sufficient capacity
  - Access should be guaranteed for migrant women
  - Free of charge (for children) or possible if you don't have money with you
  - If needed, it should be possible to find shelter in another country



## WORKSHOP 2: SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

**Chair:** Patricia Kennedy, University College of Dublin, Ireland

**Speakers:** Pieter Lauwaert, Payoke, Belgium

Dovile Rukaite, Women's Issues Information Centre, Lithuania

### Policy recommendations:

- Relax border controls – reduce power of traffickers
- Rights based approach to bodily integrity
- Legislation to protect
- Protection as a priority rather than establishing status
- Anti-poverty policies to reduce the perceived need to migrate

### Structural recommendations:

- Information at all levels
  - Officials, service providers, victims, others
  - Common definitions and interpretations
- Training & education for target populations & for service providers
  - To prevent
  - To identify
  - To inform
  - To respond
- Information campaigns on home country
- Public campaigns
  - Tv shows
  - Media campaigns

### Service recommendations:

- Networking at EU level, as this seminar
- Good co-operation with local police
- Referral system, where professional help is available



# WORKSHOP 3: HEALTH CARE AFTER SEXUAL & GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

**Chair:** Dr. Peter Decat, ICRH-University of Ghent, Belgium

**Speakers:** Dr. Angela Burnett, Medical Foundation for Care of Victims of Torture, UK  
Dr. Kristien Roelens, University Hospital Ghent, Belgium

## Policy recommendations:

- For victims: Minimum means to survive and a minimum time for a fair process
- Implementation of gender guidelines
- Enhance participation of refugees in the development of protocols to deal with SGBV and policy making about SGBV
- Guarantees for undocumented migrants that reporting SGBV is not linked with deportation procedure
- Late disclosure of sexual violence should be considered seriously
- Recognize and ensure financial support for community asylum groups

## Structural recommendations:

- Inform people who are entering the country about their rights in case of SGBV
- For social and health professionals: training on interviewing which can enable people to disclose
- Training in psychological items for health and social workers
- Training on domestic and SGBV for healthcare workers, social workers, workers in detention centers
- Safer accommodation in centers
- People feel safer in small centers
- Need for cultural mediators for reporting and seeking health care in case of SGBV
- Involve cultural communities to create and train key persons

## Service recommendations:

- Multidisciplinary approach
- Healthcare workers should actively ask their patients for experiences with violence because women won't tell spontaneously about it
- They should initiate networks of community and healthcare workers to inform and work together in the field of GBV
- In psychotherapy one should focus not exclusively on the trauma but as well on the strength of the person. 'See the person beyond the trauma'



## WORKSHOP 4: MALE ABUSE(D)

**Chair:** An-Sofie Van Parys, University Hospital Ghent, Belgium

**Speakers:** Ben Serkei, MOVISIE, the Netherlands

Dr. Guy T'Sjoen, University Hospital Ghent, Belgium

### Policy recommendations:

- Next to psycho-social help, medication for chemical castration can be very effective for men with paraphilia:
  - Legislation on this treatment should be improved
  - The decision should be taken by forensic psychiatrist
  - This treatment should be refundable based on certificate signed by psychiatrist & endocrinologist after signed informed consent from the offender

### Structural recommendations:

- Raise awareness on differences between man & women
  - Male codes (work, supporting family, ...)
  - Male abuse(d) is taboo ~ public opinion
- Education at all levels:
  - Children very early in school, violence is not normal
  - Training of professionals!
  - Be aware of our European/Western vision on this problem
  - Learning language to be able to find help
- Develop male-focused prevention & help: Prevention and cure of SGBV is now too 'women-centered'

### Service recommendations:

- Focus on the men
  - As victim
  - As perpetrator
  - As both
- An anonymous registry for chemical castration should be created
- Better physical guidance of offenders should be guaranteed



# WORKSHOP 5: EMPOWERMENT IN PREVENTION

**Chair:** Kristin Janssens, MOVISIE, the Netherlands

**Speakers:** Albena Koycheva, Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation, Bulgaria  
Jan Breyne, OOC De Morgenster, Belgium

## Policy recommendations:

- European: To facilitate (more) research and sharing of good practice
- National:
  - Give asylum seekers the right to study and work
  - Have different centres, eg. reception, transition, integration centres OR no centres at all: let people live in the community
  - Shorter asylum procedure, but not a cost of quality/fairness of decisions
  - Integration policies should include tools that raise public awareness and understanding, look at situations in countries of origin
  - Regularisation of undocumented migrants
  - Facilitate networking between organisations to establish referral mechanisms
  - Improve situation in reception centres: e.g. overcrowding.
- Regional:
  - Provide resources to develop own support groups
  - Set up independent non profit organisations for reception of asylum seekers, with trained professionals

## Structural recommendations:

- Inform refugees/asylum seekers & undocumented migrants on their rights and obligations and the legal procedures (in own language) re. different types of immigration status
- Inform them of the laws and legal procedure regarding domestic violence, sexual violence
- Network between organisations, establish and use referral mechanisms
- Train staff, management, volunteers who work with migrants
- Set up independent non profit organisations for reception of asylum seekers, with trained professionals

## Service recommendations:

- Don't focus on problems, but on possibilities
- Build diversity in employment, inter-cultural working practices
- Respect refugees as human beings, do not label them
- Empower the client, let him/her participate in decision making process
- Create conditions to regain dignity, so they can make choices
- Create recreational activities and vocational skills
- Secure quality in service provision (eg. quality of translations)
- First contact is key, ensure quality at this stage



# WORKSHOP 6: COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN PREVENTION

**Chair:** Ines Keygnaert, ICRH-University of Ghent, Belgium

**Speakers:** Cristina Florescu, OFRR, Romania

Antonio Salceda de Alba, Hospital Punta de Europa, Spain

## Policy recommendations:

- Direct dialogue communities/policy makers all levels
- The enjoyment of basic human rights, such as:
  - To work legally
  - To go to school/university
  - Access to health care not only emergencies, insurance,...
  - Real participation in society: have a voice
- Policy makers should initiate and lead behavioral change through media (soap operas,...) and education (in curricula)
- Put participation of communities as a criterion in funded practices and services

## Structural recommendations:

- Develop educational programs on Sexual Health & SGBV trainings for all age levels, starting at a very young age
- Disseminate more information of local health systems and how to access their services
- Taboos should be fought together, and working with Community-based Organizations to do that
- Information should be disseminated through different channels

## Service recommendations:

- Services should be safe spaces for their target group + confidence raised
- Self help capacity should be enhanced
- Invite parents of refugees to do social tutoring at schools
- Ethically diverse and intercultural training of staff
- Involve refugees in service delivery: create the possibility for them to become the service providers



# WORKSHOP 7: INTERCULTURAL HELP-LINES IN PREVENTION & CARE

**Chair:** Marianne Cense, Rutger Nisso Group, the Netherlands

**Speakers:** Sibille Declercq, Kinder- & Jongerentelefoon, Belgium  
Rusen Canpolat, Terrafem, Sweden

## Policy recommendations:

- The issue of sexual and gender-based violence should be kept in the political arena and politicians should take it up
- SGBV can not be seen as a medical nor as an individual problem solely

## Structural recommendations:

- Educate everybody on human rights
- Give asylum seekers information on their sexual and reproductive rights immediately when they enter the country
- Staff of reception centres and other professionals should be trained to recognise SGBV, and to treat victims in a proper, culturally sensitive way.
- Train staff at services to work with flexibility, listening, and mutual agreement

## Service recommendations:

- Outreach support and psychological counselling should be available; culture sensitive, gender specific, well trained to work with victims of violence.
- Supervision should be part of the policy
- Language is very important. Talking about experiences of violence in a strange language is a big barrier. Therefore therapist centres/social workers should include staff that come from different countries and speak different languages.
- Interpreters can be a solution but they are barriers as well, because:
  - its another person in the room and this is about shameful experiences
  - if they are part of the same community, people may fear talking or have a lack of confidence
  - For interpreters the stories of violence can be hard too: they should have support for this too
- Living conditions and safety of people living in asylum centres should be improved
- Use the potential and capacities of asylum seekers and refugees to be a bridge between asylum seekers/refugees in need and professionals. And for instance to run self help groups.



## WORKSHOP 8: AWARENESS RAISING IN PREVENTION

**Chair:** Bieke Machiels, Fedasil, Belgium

**Speakers:** Ildikó Szász, Menedék, Hungary

Ingrid Stals, Police Antwerp, Belgium

### Policy recommendations

- Improve registration of offenders
- Improve legislative protection measures
- Funding to various communities to create their own solutions and support systems

### Structural recommendations

- Media campaign & social events
- More awareness training for practitioners
- More intercultural training for service providers
- Access to employment for victims even if they don't have the status yet
- Integrate awareness raising in police action plans and guidelines
- SGBV prevention should be part of the school curriculum
- Improve access to sheers, regardless of legal status
- Separate housing for asylum seeker women and children

### Practice recommendations

- Integrated approach – interpreter + NGO + police + justice department + doctors...
- Awareness raising practice with doctors to improve screening and treatment of victims
- Exchange of good practices
- Work with offenders
- Improve access to information
- Improve interpretation services
- Involve communities
- Get victims out of isolation
- Volunteering jobs at reception centres



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