Joint Program on Domestic Violence
Strengthening National Capacities to Prevent Domestic Violence

Evaluation Brief
June 2012

Introduction: Program Background
Strengthening the National Capacities for Prevention of Domestic Violence (SNC PDV) Program was launched in 2008 as an effort to support the government and the civil society in FYR Macedonia to implement the National Strategy for Protection against Domestic Violence 2008-2011 (NSPDV). It was jointly developed and implemented by UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women and WHO in partnership with FYR Macedonia government ministries, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MoLSP), Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA), Ministry of Justice (MoJ), Ministry of Health (MoH), and Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) and was supported by the Dutch Government and the UN Trust Fund.

The goals of SNC PDV were to improve inter and intra sector coordination, and the service provision, as well as strengthen the national capacity for measuring progress, raising public awareness and effectively monitoring and evaluating the progress in domestic violence prevention efforts. These were to achieve the following outcomes: (1) Efficient policy-making and improved policy-implementation accountability of all relevant national stakeholders; (2) Extensive and comprehensive protection and support to the victims of domestic violence; (3) Increased public awareness on domestic violence.

Evaluation Purpose and Objective
A performance evaluation of SNC PDV was conducted in 2012 by an external team of two consultants. The objectives of the evaluation were to assess the overall progress towards achieving the three SNC PDV outcomes, their relevance, efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation of SNC PDV and implications for future similar interventions.

Evaluation Methodology
The data used for the report were obtained from several sources: (a) document review; (b) 50 interviews with representatives from UN Agencies, government and NGOs; (c) surveys with 20 women beneficiaries of the economic empowerment program; and (d) newspaper content analysis.

Major Findings by Outcome
Findings show that significant progress has been achieved towards strengthening the capacities of duty bearers and rights holders through SNC PDV. Particularly noteworthy are efforts to raise nation-wide awareness of domestic violence (DV) across various demographic strata, improve knowledge and skills among frontline workers that tackle DV, promote innovative initiatives to empower DV victims and facilitate multi-sectoral cooperation in protecting DV victims and survivors.

Efficient policy-making and improved policy implementation
- For the first time, the National Coordination Body (NCB), an Ad Hoc entity of 31 representatives of five ministries (MoLSP, MoE, MoIA, MoJ and MoE), as well as other institutions and civil society organizations worked towards achieving multi-sectoral coordination and implementation of NSPDV.
- NCB endorsed two comprehensive assessments that identified the need for alignment of the national domestic violence legislation vis a vis the requirements of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (aka Istanbul Convention).
- The process for the implementation of the first country-wide baseline survey for the prevalence and incidence of DV has been initiated. The objective of this survey is to overcome the existing gap in DV data and help the government in appropriate policy development and implementation.
- Efforts have been made toward improving data collection on DV from specific institutions as well as toward establishing a unified system for data collection. MoH now has a database system that
allows DV related data to be collected by medical personnel. MoLSP, ISA and Centers for Social Work (CSW) have now an electronic data collection and case management system that collects data on vulnerable children and their families including those that suffer from DV. A web-based data collection system that extracts data from four institutions covering social welfare, health, public order and courts is under way.

- Data collection on DV has enabled the MoLSP to recommend priorities in policy documents in other areas such as the National Strategy for Combating Pedophilia; MoES and MoLSP ordered changes in the way women and children victims of DV are treated in the SNC PDV sponsored Counseling Center for Children and Families.
- A new national DV strategy 2012-2015 is under way; it explores linkages and achievement noted during the implementation of the NSPDV 2008-2011 and takes them further, with a particular emphasis on M&E mechanisms. Within the purview of the new strategy, it is also foreseen that laws and by-laws related to DV will be aligned with the Istanbul Convention.

**Protection and support to victims of DV**

- Several tools, programs and services were created to address the needs of victims and perpetrators of DV. Efforts have been made to secure continuous support from the government and community.
- Production of the Umbrella Protocol with a referral mechanism and five sectoral protocols, albeit not legally binding, provide avenues for aiding policy implementation in DV related action and will serve to improve provision of services from various sectors including the police, health professionals, teachers, social workers, psychologists and NGOs. As of the time of the evaluation, close to 280 police officers, health care workers, education sector workers, social protection workers, NGO representatives were equipped with knowledge to apply protocols.
- Training activities with health professionals and police increased capacity to respond to DV victims. Training to other direct service providers such as staff at the CSWs targeted capacities to screen for DV incidence, and to provide sensitive and appropriate referrals and support.
- SNC PDV has contributed to the standardization of police response in cases of DV. With the support of the program, eight roundtable meetings to improve mutual cooperation in criminal and civil procedures were held; a Practicum for dealing with domestic violence cases which includes standard operating procedures for police, social workers, judges and prosecutors was drafted and promoted in May 2012.
- The Counseling Centre for Psychosocial Treatment of DV Perpetrators was piloted at the University Clinic of Psychiatry. The centre offers a structured program of 12 group work sessions and 4 individual sessions. Standards and norms, program and guidelines for the centre were developed. Due to these efforts, an increase was seen in the number of perpetrators referred by courts to the pilot psychosocial program in this Centre per year; in the first five months of 2012 there were 25 referrals compared to only two such referrals in 2011.
- DV Counseling Centre for Children and Families provides individual therapy and group work to children up to and including the age of eighteen and the non-violent care giver to achieve a safe living environment for children. The establishment of the centre was accompanied by different types of training. Forty representatives from the Skopje CSW, the Counseling Centre, the police, MoLSP and health institutions were trained on counseling centre services. Additional on-the-job training was delivered to the Counseling Centre staff. As part of making the centre operational, a counseling program was developed, the staff was selected and trained, the premises were refurbished and the operational costs were covered by SNC PDV. Internal files of the Counseling Centre for Children and Families indicate that 146 clients (referred and walk-ins) accessed the centre in 2011 and 55 clients accessed the centre in January-April 2012. Out of the total number of 201 clients, only 10 decided not to continue with the Counseling Centre Program.
- **Child-friendly investigation rooms.** Two pilot child-friendly investigation rooms based on nationally harmonized standards established within the CSWs were established in Skopje and Kumanovo. The purpose of these centers is to allow children to testify in cases of DV in non-threatening environments. They may be used by the police, by judges and by staff when these want to interview children, victims of DV. Following the creation of these facilities, the MoLSP has developed standards for the operation of such rooms to be established in the future in other sites.
- Efforts were made to create the continuum of care and support needed to allow those who are affected to make real changes in their lives through
the first mechanism for economic empowerment of women victims of domestic violence established in 2010. Close to 53% of the victims who were involved in the economic empowerment program were employed (57 out of the 107 who applied).

- Minimum standards for provision of services to DV victims were drafted and adopted by NGOs. These standards were piloted with seven NGOs that provided free of charge legal assistance to victims of DV in various areas of the country. Close to 387 women were supported in 2011 alone. As a proxy of the impact of these services, a trend of significantly increased reporting and service demand and provision was recorded in the lifetime of the program.

- The Multi-Agency High Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), a model from Great Britain, was adapted and introduced in every municipality where a CSW exists. This is a victim-focused meeting where information is shared on the highest risk cases of domestic abuse between criminal justice, health, child protection as well as other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors. A safety plan for each victim is then created. As of the evaluation time, 31 municipalities (upon training) expressed an interest in using the MARAC concept for dealing with high risk DV cases as part of their existing local preventive councils.

- In cooperation with the State Academy for Training of Judges and Prosecutors, approximately 100 judges and prosecutors were trained. The Guidebook for Dealing with Cases of Domestic Violence, produced by the Academy of Judges and Public Prosecutors, is a result of a series of 8 trainings on dealing with domestic violence cases, attended by over 160 professionals from the Ministry of Interior, the social sector, judges and public prosecutors.

Prevention through awareness raising and action

- Public awareness raising has been noted as one of the key achievements of SNC PDV. The program opened up the space for significant public discussions on DV. A proxy of the impact is the increased number of calls reporting DV incidence country wide.

- SNC PDV supported and organized nation-wide awareness-raising and capacity-building activities that aimed sensitization, outreach and community mobilization activities through the use of mass media and social media targeting in particular, but not limited to, men (Campaign 1), women, especially victims of DV (Campaign 2) and general public (Campaign 3) thus keeping the issue on the agenda in FYR Macedonia nationally and locally. The rate of reporting for DV cases increased as a result of the campaigns among both women and men. By way illustration, compared to 2009 when 92% of the reports were from women and 2% from men (the rest of the reports coming from the elderly and children) at the end of 2011, 88% of the reports came from women while 11% came from men, a significant break with the stereotype of the region that men are not DV victims.

- In an effort to integrate non-violence in the education system, 2000 health professionals were trained through the tailored TEACH-Violence and Injury Prevention; 60 university professors from seven relevant training institutions have the knowledge and the tools to include DV in their teaching courses. A campaign on violence-free schools had nation-wide reach; a website created by and for schools and children on the model of one-stop shop is a resource where schools, parents, community, parliamentarians, media could find what they can do to create schools free of violence.

- Close to 700 primary school teachers and 320 secondary school teachers were trained and now have basic knowledge and a tool to implement non-violence practices; other activities aimed to help teachers detect incidence of DV, be proactive and make referrals to the appropriate institutions, as articulated in NSPDV. Data collected in January 2012 show that 77% of teachers recognize positive practices. One hundred twenty schools have now a system in place to track violence in their schools and a guidance on how schools should cooperate with institutions such as the police, and CSWs.

- The National Network of CSOs to End Violence Against Women established through SNC PDV aims to achieve more coordinated action of women Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) on the issue of gender based violence and domestic violence towards encouraging effective policy framework, improved services and institutional and public awareness. To date the network counts 25 NGO members and grows. Through SNC PDV, NGO members enhanced capacities in advocacy and lobbying for improved institutional response to violence against women and participated in significant awareness campaigns to end violence against women in FYR Macedonia.

Relevance, Effectiveness and Efficiency

- Overall, SNC PDV is a valuable initiative that filled a void by providing an integrated approach in
dealing with DV. The SNC PDV was well aligned with the national priorities on addressing domestic violence as expressed in the NSPDV. SNC PDV was very much a dynamic program that adapted to the current developments and needs of beneficiaries.

- SNC PDV has been effective in many ways, as in: (1) changing and implementing legal or policy frameworks; (2) strengthening the capacities of duty bearers and rights holders; (3) strengthening the capacities of civil society; (4) enhancing protection mechanisms for DV survivors; and (5) awareness raising. SNC PDV has been less successful in: i) direct services; ii) continuation of some program activities upon project completion, and iii) support to counterparts in M&E, reporting, and establishing partnerships between CSOs and government.

- Recognition of the multi-faceted and relational nature of capacity allowed the work within various layers of the government systems and engaging various stakeholders. The engagement of multiple stakeholders across sectors and disciplines allowed the development of better mutual understanding and opportunities of joint action and collective solutions.

- An effective way to build capacities in both the government and civil society sector was the blend of various capacity development methodologies. Conventional methodologies such as training and workshop methods, technical advice on specific topics, support in project management and support to lobby and advocacy were combined with more advanced methodologies that focus on action learning through pilot projects, knowledge brokering and networking, and multi-stakeholder processes.

- SNC-PDV had a presence in many municipalities all over FYR Macedonia, making it one, if not, the largest program on DV ever implemented in the country. Its inclusive nature and efforts to reach across ethnic origin and age groups as well as its efforts to create synergies with other government programs such as Active Labor Market Measures helped deliver results effectively.

- The majority of the activities of SNC PDV were completed within the allocated budget and within a reasonable time-frame. It had a lean management structure that has allowed most funding goes for programmatic work.

- Yet, sustaining results depends on a variety of factors including strengthening the implementation of legal and institutional practices, securing institutional stability, especially in terms of human and financial resources, building synergies that consider cultural and social understandings of protecting victims and survivors of DV. The process started by SNC PDV may be halted after the funding ends due to the limited resources available at the government level or to the NGOs.

**Inter-Agency Coordination**

- SNC PDV is the first action in which UN Agencies in FYR Macedonia worked together on a joint program. Overall most agencies believe that delivering as one by utilizing the expertise, the resources and experience in each agency was an appropriate model to address DV. In the context of joint action, participating UN Agencies generally took and implemented measures to coordinate among themselves and overcome challenges in harmonization of action.

**Recommendations**

Evaluation found strong support that SNC PDV, or a version of it, should be continued in conjunction with other recommendations.

**Policy-making and policy implementation**

- Embed DV within the larger context of gender-based violence and ensure that gender relations and gender issues in general, continue to be given significant emphasis especially in M&E.

- Work with the new NCB and the relevant ministries toward improving the management of this entity by appointing a technical NCB coordinator; expanding membership to include members of the Judicial Council and members of Parliament as observers; participating government members to NCB should work on DV issues in the relevant ministries as part of their overall duties.

- Translate the final version of the Istanbul Convention and ensure that systems that deliver services to DV victims are ready to fulfill obligations deriving from the future ratification of this convention.

- Assist FYR Macedonia in improving a harmonized system for monitoring and evaluating DV strategy. Projects/activities carried out by the government should feature a built-in evaluation methodology, to avoid lack of data and time-lags in the evaluation.

**Protection**

- Develop mechanisms that ensure policies and protocols relate to DV are consistently applied and monitored, and the rights and needs of victims are duly considered by law professionals and service providers.
• Expand training for first responders to DV cases among the police, health professionals and SOS lines with more advanced knowledge; customize training for front-line workers and offer training of longer duration.
• Support should be sought and maintained for direct services for women and children, victims of DV. These include initiatives to reform the CSW, further training for SOS lines and ensuring the sustainability of specific centers dealing with DV and the shelters.
• In building support systems that enable DV victims regain control of their lives, give careful consideration to customize subsidy system for employment to DV victims and link economic empowerment and career building to other social supports that are required to support victims and help them stay safe, such as housing, transportation, income, childcare and education.
• Explore government models for supporting NGOs to provide free legal aid. It is necessary that a cost-benefit analysis of the consequences that derive from not providing this type of aid be commissioned to best inform policies regarding this service.

Prevention
• Create and sustain primary prevention programs aimed at preventing DV. These programs should be available to people starting with early childhood and continuing across the life span and should recognize and reflect the social determinants of health, including gender, poverty, employment and inequality.
• Sensitize journalists about the complexity and importance of the issue in order to provide better quality of the DV articles in future. Special consideration should be placed on presenting the DV as an infringement of human rights, avoiding the perpetuation of DV myths and taking stronger commitment in condemning violence.
• Building on the work started at the Counseling Centre for DV Perpetrators, explore modalities that target men who are abusive and controlling in intimate partner relationships, hold them accountable and support them to move towards respectful and non-violent relationships.

Relevance, effectiveness, efficiency
Recommendations below are offered in the event that UN Agencies decide to extend the achievements of SNC PDV through other joint programs.

• Build on research and evidence that exists currently and on the broad range of field experience that has been developed through SNC PDV to ensure that actions remain consistently relevant; direct support to participatory research at both the diagnostic level and follow-up or validation that victims’ needs are met.
• Make more efforts to target and reach diverse groups, such as rural women, people with disabilities and people living in remote ethnic areas. Future interventions need to take into consideration the different dynamics and lifestyles of people in these categories and customize prevention and protection interventions in a way that makes it relevant to their experiences and challenges.
• Ensure in the short-term that capacity building work is effectively monitored and evaluated. This should include follow-up with beneficiaries to assess the effectiveness and utilization of skills and to provide further support where required.
• Support the government of FYR Macedonia to draw a realistic plan for future financial resourcing for both ministerial and municipal services related to DV, and continue to promote decentralization of funding, so that the realistic sustainability of the interventions can be ensured. All line ministries should show within their overall action plans how they will work on DV, and the budget that will support this.
• Consider adopting a quality assurance role for DV capacity-building both in terms of resources/materials development and workshops. This could draw in regional or international resources, to provide technical inputs to training implemented by other actors, encouraging coordination and systematic prioritization of training and promoting realistic but effective approaches to monitoring and evaluation.
• Seek and maintain support for regional activities, organizations and networks through exchange visits in order to improve the sustainability of capacity activities and produce a coherent regional response and mobilize knowledge in the region for joint action.
• Plan an inception phase of at least six months, where all the structures are in place before a future joint action starts; this includes planning, coordination, and reporting mechanisms and finding jointly ways to simplify those processes.
• Set aside sufficient and necessary resources to have the essential staff to manage components of the program and retain the services of an independent
program monitor who would be well versed and experienced in Results Based Management Framework.

**Inter-agency and country partnership management**

- All agencies need to focus lessons learning on this joint action in order to determine better the fit among the different agency agendas and to help in developing future DV related action.
- In the context of dwindling engagement of donors in FYR Macedonia, it is important that UN Agencies map the range of government, civil society, and donor partnerships that future programs on DV require and then proceed systematically to develop those partnerships assessing the most strategic relationships and sequencing their development according to opportunities and resources.
- Should UN Agencies embark on a new joint venture to further results achieved under SNC PDV, it is recommended that the procedures for application, reporting and communication with partners should be harmonized across the agencies.
- UN Agencies should allow more time to evaluate extensive programs like SNC PDV. In order for the conclusions and recommendations to remain valid for future program design and implementation, resources, including time, should be proportionate to the extent of the programmatic intervention evaluated and consider better planning in full awareness of current developments when such exercises are taken.

**Lessons learned**

- The existence of NSPDV with specific activities prioritized, enabled the UN to plan on a short- and long-term basis with the government for better utilization of resources.
- The integrated approach to addressing DV, one that recognizes the need to include multiple agencies in interventions has facilitated inter-agency cooperation. More importantly, it has changed the government mentality to ensure that addressing prevention and protection from DV is an integrated function and no longer confined to one specific agency.
- Learning to articulate and prioritize demands for capacity building link directly to the improvement in the work of government ministries. Ensuring that resources are allocated to DV and that this is backed by an institutionalized agreement for cooperation allows for a more targeted and efficient intervention.
- The inclusion of civil society and the private sector contributes to the global ownership of DV initiatives, and allows for general buy-in among the public. By modifying activities as needed, the flexibility shown by SNC PDV has enhanced its prospects for local ownership.
- Solidly-designed communication strategies have been conducive to the satisfactory results of SNC PDV. Sound planning of the communication scheme throughout SNC PDV was essential in preventing misunderstandings, improve communication among agencies, secure buy-in from the counterparts, and build institutional memory within the beneficiary institutions.
- UN agencies hold a comparative advantage to assist FYR Macedonia with DV activities. Sound expertise is located in their staff. Further the solid reputation and positioning of the UN in FYR Macedonia are factors that contribute to the establishment of relations that are based on trust and respect, hence leading to positive results.
- A well-organized staffing structure impacts the successful implementation of a joint program. Clarification of the Terms of Reference and Responsibilities for the Chief Technical Advisor to coordinate the overall effort of all agencies as the implementation progressed was particularly helpful in improving coordination among agencies.
- Commitment is a key factor of success not only within government, but also in the business sector and the civil society. In strengthening capacities of these actors, their absorptive capacity needs to be closely examined prior to placing any specific demands on them. A realistic understanding of the implications the introduction of programs such as SNC PDV bring on government level officials and other actors in terms of time and capacities they have make for smooth implementation of these programs.

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