TOOLKIT FOR INTEGRATING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACTIVITIES INTO PROGRAMMING IN EUROPE & EURASIA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

July 2009

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The author is Elisabeth Duban.

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Violence against women is a continuum of acts that violate women's basic human rights, resulting in devastating consequences for women who experience it, traumatic impact on those who witness it, de-legitimization of States that fail to prevent it and the impoverishment of entire societies that tolerate it.[1]

Introduction

Violence against women (VAW), and specifically domestic violence (DV), is perhaps the most widespread and common human rights violation, experienced by women daily in every country of the world. Despite the pervasiveness of the problem, VAW has not been perceived as a global epidemic requiring urgent action. Over the last 15 years, progress has been made in the international community from recognizing and characterizing VAW as a fundamental human rights violation to the development of policies and recommendations to combat such violence. More recently, global development initiatives have also acknowledged the role that VAW plays in disempowering women across all spheres of life. The articulation of State obligations to address VAW and the construction of frameworks that set forth critical areas for government response are also important indicators of progress. Yet, despite these fundamental efforts, at the level of daily life, fully translating these policies into concrete mechanisms for women's protection remains a challenge.

Countries in the Europe and Eurasia (E&E) region have made considerable progress in addressing DV, primarily in the areas of legal reform and development of support services for survivors of violence. No country, however, is consistently fulfilling its obligations to prevent violence, protect and support survivors and to prosecute perpetrators of violence. Women face considerable impediments to accessing the legal system, in part due to gaps which still exist in the law and in part due to deeply-rooted notions about women and violence that persist among legal professionals no less than in other parts of society. Critical support services, such as temporary shelter and housing assistance, are insufficient, and many groups of women, including minorities, and those from rural areas or with disabilities, are isolated from services that do exist. Because of inconsistent prosecution efforts, perpetrators of violence act with impunity. Nor have they been the focus of assistance for their violent behavior or for other social problems that contribute to violence, such as substance abuse.

While States have supported significant reforms to address some aspects of VAW, DV has not been a priority area for government programs (or budget allocations) in the region. Many of the positive developments can thus be attributed to non-governmental organizations, which are still quite dependent on support from international, bi-lateral and private donors. Funding streams for work to address VAW in the E&E region, however, have been gradually lessening. This has meant that comprehensive programs are rare, and much of the work being done is through piecemeal activities. Nevertheless, VAW in all forms remains a serious impediment to the development of stable and democratic societies in this region.

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[1] *Integration of the Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective: Violence Against Women. Toward an Effective Implementation of International Norms to End Violence Against Women*, Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences, E/CN.4/2004/66, (2003).

The Impact of Domestic Violence on Development Work

When DV persists, women's fundamental human rights remain unprotected and a nation's rule of law is undermined. Women cannot access justice, and their very lives are not safe. At the same time, DV presents serious health consequences for victims, causing injuries and psychological distress, leading to chronic health problems and, in extreme cases, death. When women experience DV, they are also at greater risk for sexually transmitted diseases and complications during pregnancy. The impact of violence on a woman's health is directly related to her ability to work productively. DV places significant economic strains on a country, not only as a result of women's lost productivity, but also in the costs associated with absenteeism, emergency care, police response, social support services and, of course, the human costs. DV impacts far more than the individual victims. It tears apart families and destabilizes communities. Finally, because DV is a form of discrimination and is based on subordination of women, it also impedes women themselves from participating in development efforts to improve their own communities and countries.

Purpose and Methodology

This toolkit builds on earlier USAID reports that describe DV in the E&E region, analyze the intersections between DV and human trafficking and explore whether models for mixing services for survivors of these two types of VAW are appropriate and workable under USAID programming. Each of these earlier publications acknowledged that there has been inadequate funding for comprehensive and stand-alone programs to address DV in the region. This toolkit, however, goes a step further and aims to address the current situation by offering guidance to USAID personnel, as well as a wide audience of implementing partners, other donor organizations and professionals working on VAW in host countries. The toolkit suggests ways to integrate anti-violence activities into various sectors of USAID work and provides a number of illustrations of the form that such activities could take. It is not the intention of this resource that the examples provided be replicated wholesale. Rather, the background information, by sector, suggests points of intervention, and the short examples are intended as references that will stimulate greater thought toward how DV concerns can be incorporated under larger programs.

The material in this toolkit was primarily gathered through Internet research, and this methodology does present its own limitations. Unfortunately, because USAID currently has little dedicated programming on DV in the E&E region, information about interesting yet small scale activities on this topic was difficult to access. Relying on final program reports, success stories and materials published by implementing partners meant that information on DV programming was generally lacking in detail, and the scope of such activities was not always clear. Furthermore, because DV projects have been limited, there has not been significant evaluation of their impact. The scarcity of information on USAID programming in the E&E region on domestic violence also suggests that when DV topics are interwoven into larger projects it has not been under any particular strategy. Rather, such activities appear as additional to the main focus of a project and have generally been added when the implementing partner or the beneficiaries recognize an unfilled need. It is hoped, therefore, that this toolkit will serve as a platform for both creative thought on addressing domestic violence and also to improve awareness of how small DV activities, when planned, can contribute to a greater strategic goal to combat VAW.

Guiding Principles and Strategies

The types of programming currently in focus in the E&E region offer many opportunities on which to base activities that address DV. It should be kept in mind, however, that even when it is not possible to design a comprehensive anti-DV program, activities should conform to specific principles that guide work on VAW. For example, because DV is a complicated social phenomenon, it requires interventions across sectors, specifically, programs that are designed to prevent or lessen the impact of DV, protect survivors and prosecute perpetrators. Each of these areas of work is large in and of itself, and it is not realistic that any one program could address them all. At the same time, it is crucial that the efforts of host country governments, local NGOs and other donors are assessed so that, collectively, a more comprehensive response to DV is advanced. A corollary to the principle of taking a multi-sector approach is to promote coordination and partnerships to address DV. Perhaps no partnership is more crucial in the area of combating VAW than that between government and civil society organizations. The E&E region is characterized by active women's organizations that, in many cases, are filling gaps where State-provided services are insufficient or simply do not exist. While a robust civil society is an important goal, and women's organizations serve as necessary links to individual survivors of DV, the State's obligation to respond to violations of citizens' rights remains critical. USAID can play a key role in fostering mechanisms for cooperation in combating DV and this, in turn, should help to ensure that anti-DV projects are sustainable.

All activities that address DV should keep the needs of victims and survivors at the center. It is paramount that the rights, safety and confidentiality of victims not be compromised, even when there is the temptation to take a new or innovative approach to VAW. At the same time, too often DV interventions are not based on data about the causes or consequences of DV nor do they rely on information about what victims identify as needed in order to improve their situations. Activities that address DV should be empowering to individual women and provide them with tools to make independent choices. Projects should not be based around standardized or ready-made solutions. Among activists on VAW, a corollary strategy has developed to increase attention to men in DV programs, generally in two broad spheres: addressing perpetrators of violence and involving non-violent men as advocates and role models. Programs for perpetrators can range from merely punitive to educational and rehabilitative or therapeutic, and efforts to introduce such programs are quite new in the E&E region. Involving men in the movement against DV is also critical as men serve as positive role models not only for their children but also in society at large. This particular strategy has proven successful in other parts of the world but is relatively underdeveloped in the E&E region. However, given USAID's focus on programs for youth and increasing men's involvement in other "non-traditional" spheres, such as family planning and childbirth, there are entry points to also involving men in the promotion of gender equality generally.

Integrating Domestic Violence Activities by Sector

This toolkit focuses on recommendations and examples for how DV activities can be interwoven into programs that span the sectors where USAID is most active in the E&E region.

Democracy and Governance

In the area of Democracy and Governance, for example, reform projects have already proven effective in improving the legal base for the protection of DV survivors and also in training a range of legal professionals, sometimes extending to law enforcement more generally, such as the police. There are similar opportunities to address DV through programs that aim to improve the function and responsiveness of local government. Of all the forms of VAW, DV can perhaps be best addressed

through coordinated efforts at the local level, particularly in the areas of prevention and service provision. Responding to violence in the community, in any form, and ensuring citizen safety, is a critical function of local government and one that USAID programming could promote. In the E&E region, there are several examples of media initiatives in support of civil society work against DV, such as in public awareness campaigns. Because the media can also be instrumental in influencing how society views and understands DV, media programs can build the capacities of journalists, reporters and others to accurately and fairly report on VAW.

Health

Healthcare workers, likewise, are critical to the development of an effective response to DV. Particularly in countries in which women do not view the legal system as a viable option for relief, medical professionals may be the only authorities from which a DV survivor will seek help. Therefore, all primary care professionals can benefit from programs that sensitize them to DV and provide information about how to make appropriate referrals. Likewise, projects in areas where women are most likely to seek healthcare, such as maternal and child health clinics or family planning centers, are appropriate venues for activities on how to screen for and address DV with patients or clients. Because women's vulnerabilities to violence and HIV/AIDS are interconnected, many practitioners and activists are linking their activities in these spheres, not only at the level of assistance for individual women, but also in prevention work with youth, young men in particular, and in advocacy and policy projects.

Economic Growth

The economic strain that results from DV, and all forms of VAW, on a society is significant and all the more damaging to law enforcement, legal and healthcare systems that are undergoing reform, as is the case in many countries of the E&E REGION. USAID policy programs, and even projects that aim to improve local budgeting procedures, should consider the burden that DV places on the economy when it is not adequately addressed. DV is also exacerbated by women's lower economic status and lack of economic independence. Thus, small business and microenterprise development projects can give at-risk women critical skills to assist them in escaping violence.

Youth Programs

In the E&E region, USAID supports a number of programs aimed at youth. Young people are very important beneficiaries and promoters of anti-DV messages. Youth projects can include education about how to avoid DV, as part of healthy lifestyle projects. Girls, in particular, can be empowered to become leaders with the confidence to avoid violent relationships. Projects that focus more attention on young men can foster new norms of gender equitable relationships and ultimately lead to behavior change. No less important is involving young people as advocates for change in their own communities.

Vulnerable Groups

Women with disabilities, female refugees and women from ethnic minority groups may face increased risks for domestic violence due to their particular status, but very often programs and interventions targeting women in mainstream society overlook these vulnerable groups. USAID programming for vulnerable groups can be a useful entry point for also addressing DV. In many instances, specific services should be developed that respond to the particular vulnerabilities to violence, for example in programs that prevent child abandonment and work with disadvantaged families. In other cases, existing services can be assisted to become more inclusive and accessible to minority women. It is a good practice to include such groups of women as stakeholders in project development. In all cases, awareness raising projects can help to eliminate preconceptions regarding minority women and violence.

Trafficking in Persons Programs

DV makes women and girls more vulnerable to being trafficked, primarily because many of the same factors contribute to DV and trafficking in persons (TIP), as both are forms of VAW. Considerable attention had been given to developing programs, often quite comprehensive ones, to address trafficking in persons in the E&E region. Unfortunately, such much-needed projects on TIP have often come at the expense of DV programs, when funding has shifted to the problem that is perceived as both "new" and more urgent. While some interventions for DV and TIP can be appropriately mixed, for example publicity and awareness-raising campaigns, it is critical that DV programs, especially those run by NGOs, be supported separately. Policy-level work should also aim to promote a more holistic approach that addresses the root causes of VAW, such as discrimination and gender inequality.

Post-Conflict Reconstruction

In post-conflict settings, incidents of both human trafficking and DV increase. While TIP may be addressed under projects on organized crime, DV, which takes place wholly in the private sphere, often goes unnoticed. However, many of the characteristics of post-conflict societies, such as economic and political instability, ethnic tensions, men who have been involved in war and the availability of light weapons, all contribute to DV. USAID post-conflict recovery programs should ensure the security and safety of all citizens, whether in the community or at home. Risk assessments and conflict reduction strategies, therefore, should not overlook VAW. Finally, psychosocial programs that address the lingering trauma of war can also incorporate services for DV survivors.

Global Partnerships

Finally, an emerging area of work for USAID is the promotion of partnerships to advance common development goals. Both the private sector and faith organizations have the potential to contribute greatly to the reduction of VAW. Private corporations are increasingly supporting anti-VAW projects and also taking the lead in campaigning against DV, both to their customer base and within the workplace. Given the development of private enterprise and investment by multinational corporations in the E&E region, USAID is well placed to explore the possibilities of partnership projects against DV. Likewise, the influence of religion remains strong in the E&E region, and faith groups are already undertaking efforts to promote healthy family relationships and reduce stigma about HIV/AIDS. These efforts could certainly be broadened to include more explicit anti-DV messages, support for victims and censure of perpetrators.

Conclusion

Adding activities that address DV is not necessarily a process that involves significant additional funding. Indeed, some of the activities described in this toolkit relied on volunteer efforts or made use of in-kind donations, such as from media outlets. It is vital, however, that DV activities are added in a thoughtful manner after consideration of larger national efforts and how such activities will fit within the strategy framework in the particular country. In order to be effective, even the introduction of small projects requires assessment, coordination and planning. Ultimately, however, when resources for large-scale projects are scare, well-considered individual activities targeting specific aspects of DV can collectively have a broad impact.